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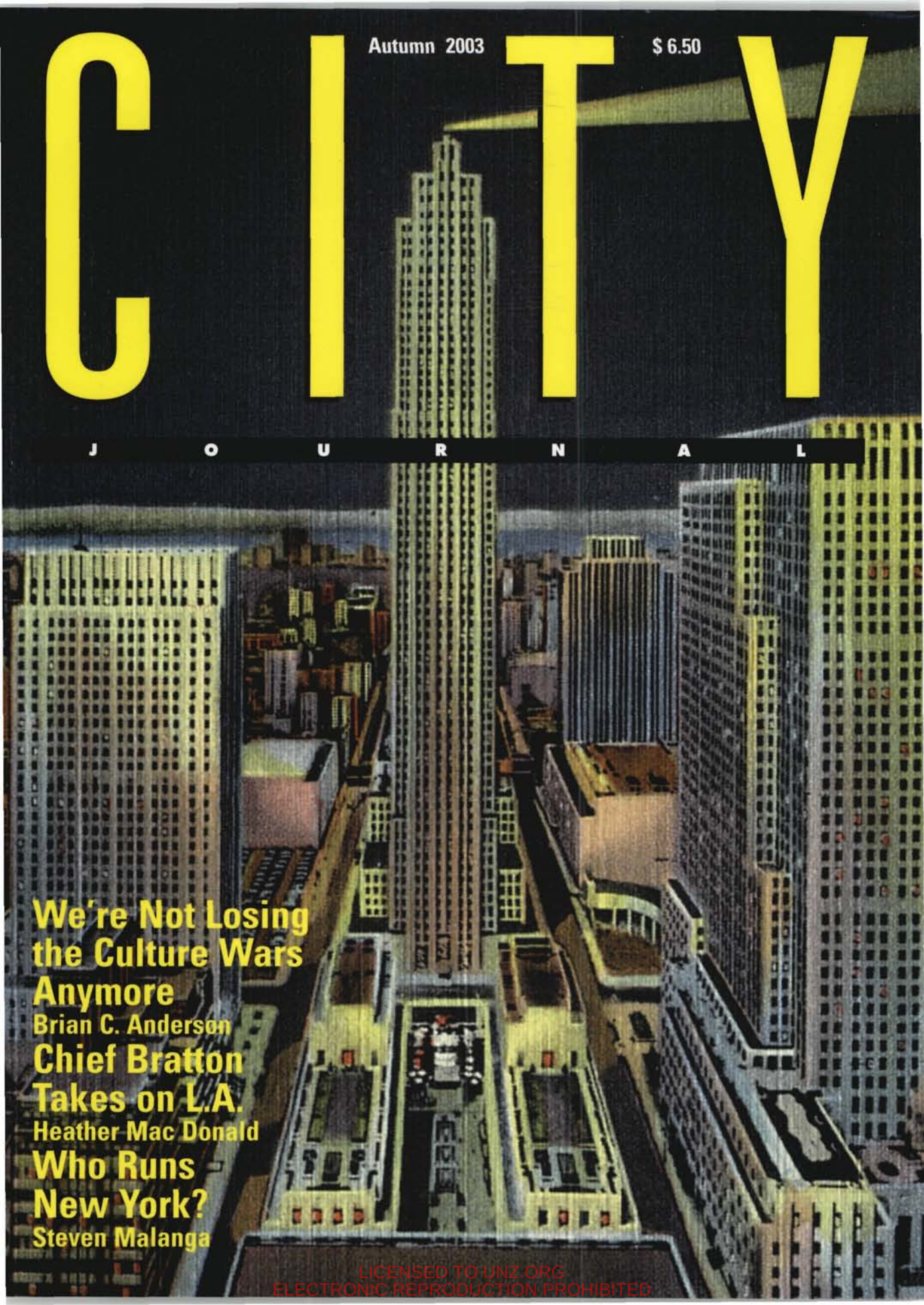

We're Not Losing the Culture Wars Anymore
Brian C. Anderson

Chief Bratton Takes on L.A.
Heather Mac Donald

Who Runs New York?
Steven Malanga

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In Prospect

Forget foretelling the future; it's often hard enough just to perceive the present, and rare is the magazine article that can describe an important shift in reality just as it is solidifying into existence and altering the makeup of the world. *City Journal* has had its share of such stories, but we are especially excited that this issue brings you not one but two such perception-altering pieces.

Start with our cover story, Brian C. Anderson's "We're Not Losing the Culture Wars Anymore" (page 14). It is a staple of right-of-center journals that the Left has control of the culture: how many books and articles have you read (some in *City Journal*, too) complaining that the networks, the *New York Times*, the newsweeklies, the big publishers, and the universities have a stranglehold on opinion and news, so that conservatives can't get a hearing and don't get a chance to correct the misrepresentations and distortions of the Left even on matters of fact? And until just recently, that has been dismayingly true. As Anderson himself has written ("Illiberal Liberalism," Spring 2001), opinion makers on the Left have gotten used to not even having to argue against conservative opponents. They could just wave them aside contemptuously, as not meriting discussion—too outside the mainstream.

No more. Over the last five years—and especially since the Iraq war—three great changes in mass communications have ended the Left's monopoly. On cable TV, Fox News has almost overnight wrested away from the networks a large and loyal audience for its smart, urbane coverage, which, while striving far harder than the networks to tell the objective truth, also makes no bones about its conservative principles. Also on cable, comedians and cartoons gleefully (if rudely) jeer at political correctness nightly, to the delight of numerous young viewers unlikely to embrace left-wing shibboleths with much solemnity in the future. Meanwhile, dozens of conservative Internet sites post a constantly updated barrage of news and opinion that eloquently presents the conservative take on the world, that shapes stories even before the *New York Times* can write them, and that effectively calls the big dailies and weeklies to account for their distortions and evasions. Book publishers, noticing from all this that a healthy market for conservative opinion exists, have poured out a flood of right-of-center books, which, promoted through the web and cable TV, and cheerfully sold by the chain bookstores, have succeeded resoundingly, regardless of what the *Times Book Review* may say.

The Left splutters that a cabal of right-wingers has seized control of the media, which lying liars of the Right now dominate, and which can only be countered by setting up left-wing counterparts to Fox and Rush Limbaugh, as if Dan Rather and Peter Jennings, not to mention the *Times* and the Ivy League, didn't already exist. All of which is to say that healthy debate is back. Get used to it, brethren on the Left.

Our second pathbreaking story, Steven Malanga's "Who Runs New York?" on page 46, began as an in-depth exploration of Mayor Mike Bloomberg's proposal that Gotham adopt nonpartisan municipal elections, like Los Angeles. The more Malanga looked into the Progressive reformers of a century ago who first proposed this idea and the hundred or so cities that actually have such a system, the more he realized that nonpartisan elections are a non-issue. They make no difference. More important, he realized that they were the answer to the wrong question. The mayor had proposed a solution to a problem that hasn't existed in New York for decades—and no commentator seemed to grasp that.

Sure, New York's municipal politics are askew, and the system is as much a conspiracy against the public as the Tammany vultures and tigers that Thomas Nast caricatured in the Boss Tweed era. But party bosses no longer run New York; the public-sector unions and the social-services organizations that live off the public purse now control Gotham's political system, with the Democratic Party serving only as their instrument, not their master or patron, though that shift remains largely invisible. To change the system requires first understanding what it really is, not what it seems to be; and Malanga's profoundly insightful article trains a searchlight on that hitherto obscure, and intensely unattractive, reality—ripe for reform.

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oundings

Wimping Out on Welfare

The Bloomberg administration wants to cut the heart out of welfare reform.

It couldn't last. In the 1990s, New York City was a national leader in welfare reform, promoting the idea of work as a condition of welfare and demonstrating its beneficial results: from 1995 to 2001, city welfare rolls plummeted nearly 60 percent. But the city's role as welfare reformer was ultimately too incongruous for this longtime mecca of dependency. With Mayor Mike Bloomberg's recent recommendations to the Bush administration on the future of welfare, the city has reverted to pre-Giuliani type, embracing long-discredited urban orthodoxies.

At stake is the reauthorization of the 1996 federal welfare act known as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The act required states to place 50 percent of their caseloads in some sort of work activity by 2002, and it put a five-year limit on receiving federal welfare benefits. For the first time in history, welfare bureaucrats started telling welfare applicants that they had to look for a job and that they could not stay on welfare for the rest of their lives. That message roused both bureaucrat and recipient to action. Welfare agencies' unprecedented emphasis on employment led to a 60 percent national decline in the number of families on the dole from 1994 to 2001. Work rates among welfare recipients soared. Poverty in single-parent families fell to a historical low of 25 percent in 2000 (and remained low in the recent recession).

Unfortunately, the rolls stopped dropping almost everywhere in July 2001. A key reason: TANF's too-liberal work rules. States may offset the 50 percent work requirement with a credit for caseload reduction: if a state's rolls drop 25 percent, for example, it need only put 25 percent of the remaining recipients into a work activity. TANF also allows states to exempt 20 percent of their recipients from any responsibilities at all, on the assumption that some recipients are too dysfunctional to work. Because of the caseload-reduction credit, most states today don't have to put anyone to work. Not surprisingly, once states faced a zero work-participation requirement, their efforts to get welfare recipients into jobs slacked off.

The White House and the House of Representatives want to reenergize the drive toward self-sufficiency. They propose a 70 percent work-participation requirement over five years, before caseload-reduction credits. But the Bloomberg administration opposes this perfectly reasonable goal. It argues that too many of the remaining people on the rolls simply cannot participate in work activities, and thus that the work requirements should remain at 50 percent. The city cites its own work-exemption rate as proof that the remaining welfare caseload is too disabled to look for a job or perform workfare. Whereas in April 1999, the city deemed just 23 percent of the caseload unable to work, that exempt category has now swollen to 57 percent.

It's hard to decide which is more troubling: the Bloomberg administration's arguments or the evidence it cites for them. The city should be relentlessly promoting the idea that work is essential to stable families and society—that absent severe disability, everyone can contribute something productive to his fellow citizens. It was the zeal to work and succeed that made New York the economic and cultural powerhouse it once was. But the billionaire mayor's administration has apparently ignored that lesson in its welfare practices. The "barriers" to work that have led to its whopping 57 percent work-exemption rate are, according to the city's own account, "literacy, physical and mental disabilities as well as situations such as victims of domestic violence."

These are spurious excuses for non-work. The city's hotels and restaurants keep running thanks to the labor of immigrants, many of whom do not speak English and often lack even a grammar-school education, yet who do well enough to send surplus wages to their families back home. The Americans with Disabilities Act imposes draconian penalties on employers for even wondering whether an applicant's physical or mental disability might interfere with his job performance, and such groups as Fountain House have shown that the mentally ill can provide vital services to employers while benefiting from the therapeutic effects of a job. A recent study has shown that so-called "barriers" to work such as

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health or child-care problems do not influence employment outcomes for welfare recipients. As for victims of domestic violence, the best therapy is to show the S.O.B. that you can support yourself without him.

BROWN BROTHERS (2)

New York's rising work-exemption rate suggests that the poverty advocates (who in effect *do* advocate poverty by opposing work requirements) have once again reasserted their historical dominance of city welfare policy. And not just the work-exemption rate signals this counterrevolution. The Bloomberg administration is also arguing to Congress that education should count as work for 40 percent of the caseload, up from the current 30 percent. Yet there is conclusive evidence that spending years in training does not improve the life chances of those on public assistance, while going right to job-search and work does. It was precisely the failed regime of training as an excuse for non-work that led to the 1996 welfare-reform bill in the first place.

At a time when the city is asking its sanitation, police, and transportation services—essential for urban life—to reduce their budgets, it is remarkable that it is advocating policies that will increase the number of welfare dependents. Since Mayor Rudolph Giuliani began requiring work as a condition for welfare, the city has saved $2 billion a year in welfare costs. Those savings will evaporate once recipients understand that the city is no longer serious about work. And the children of mothers who then end up languishing on the rolls will be worse, not better, off.

The city's backtracking on welfare reform is disastrous not only for New York, but for the country as a whole. The Bush administration frequently points to Gotham as proof that promoting the right ideas about work can change even the most entrenched welfare culture. Now the city itself is trying to undercut that argument. It's not too late for the city to reassert itself as a leader in welfare reform; it only means recognizing again the truth that work—not welfare benefits—offers the best route out of poverty.

—Heather Mac Donald

Sanity on the Homeless

An important court decision will let Gotham help the homeless stay off the streets.

Kudos to the Bloomberg administration for conclusively demonstrating the hypocrisy of "homeless" advocates. New York City has finally won the right to evict violent and disruptive vagrants from its homeless shelters. In so doing, it has exposed the advocates' Big Lie: that they want the homeless off the streets.

State law has long given the city the power to ban unruly individuals temporarily from shelters if they repeatedly violate behavioral rules. The advocates, however, successfully sued to prevent the city from using that power. Now a court has just reversed the advocates' reign over shelter management, enabling the city to enforce safety in its massive shelter system. In response, the advocates are emitting their usual whine: The city's heartless action will result in more people on the streets.

What a joke! For 20 years, the homeless industry has dedicated itself to keeping deranged addicts, alcoholics, and criminals on the streets and out of treatment. Remember Billie Boggs (a.k.a. Joyce Brown), the psychotic colonizer of a steam grate on Second Avenue, who became liberals' favorite symbol of the right to live on the streets? From her sidewalk campsite, Brown ran out into traffic, threatened passersby, covered herself in feces, and tore up, burned, and urinated on paper money given to her by charitable pedestrians. Her sisters begged the city to hospitalize her for

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her drug-fueled psychoses, and New York mayor Ed Koch agreed.

But the New York Civil Liberties Union successfully fought Koch's effort to get her off the streets and into treatment. The left-wing trial judge who ordered Brown back onto the steam grate established a pattern: his moralizing was directly at odds with the consequences of his actions. "It is my hope that the plight [Brown] represents will also offend moral conscience and rouse it to action," wrote Judge Robert Lippmann self-righteously. But the Koch administration *was* taking action; it was Lippmann and the advocates who were abandoning a deranged woman to the streets.

This pattern persisted until today. When the Dinkins administration tried to get vagrants into shelters before the Democratic National Convention, the advocates went berserk, accusing the mayor of trying to clean up the city at the expense of homeless people's alleged right to the streets. Every Giuliani effort to enforce laws against street disorder and protect the mentally ill and the addicted from violence and frostbite and gangrene by getting them into shelter provoked similar outcries.

The advocates' favorite justification for keeping vagrants on the street in plain view was that the shelters were "dangerous." But the reason the shelters were (or appeared) dangerous was that the advocates wouldn't let the city keep them safe. Faced with the shameless hypocrisy of their Big Lie, the advocates resorted to petty little lies. During a debate with me on the television station New York One, Mary Brosnahan of the Coalition for the Homeless claimed that it was the *guards* who made the shelters dangerous, not the homeless. This statement was preposterous. While doubtless some guards abuse their power, those occasions pale in number to the times when thuggish vagrants threaten other shelter occupants.

It is beyond the advocates' ken that the purpose of rules is more to prevent bad behavior than to punish it after it occurs. To be sure, some violent shelter residents will wind up getting kicked out. Others, however, will start to improve their conduct simply when faced with the prospect of consequences. And if the advocates are right that it is fear of disorder and violence in the shelters that keeps so many derelicts in the streets, the number of people who now will start using shelters overwhelms the number of people who will be evicted.

Enforcing expectations of reasonable behavior not only is essential to shelter management; it is a vital prerequisite to bringing vagrants back into society. Until street colonists learn to obey even the most minimal rules for decent conduct, they cannot expect to hold a job or an apartment. But then, the advocates don't really seek to get the homeless working and housed. For the advocates, keeping the homeless on the streets is essential to fund-raising and serves an ideological need as well, as demonstrated by Judge Robert Lippmann: railing against a heartless capitalist society even as you prevent that society from exercising real, effective compassion.

—Heather Mac Donald

"Scholarship" as Advocacy

Governor Schwarzenegger should terminate the University of California's "labor centers."

The University of California's network of "labor centers," operating under the umbrella of the Institute for Labor and Employment (ILE), has won some $21 million in state money to fund research, much of which has simply promoted labor's position on a host of issues, including supporting union-boosting living-wage laws and union-organizing efforts (see "Union U," Spring 2003).

The ILE has made the news most recently by aiding organized labor's unsuccessful effort to defeat the recall of Democratic governor Gray Davis. Institute staffers led a series of seminars around the state that trained union members for the movement known as WAR—Workers Against the Recall. The UCLA Labor Center was even going to host one of the seminars, until complaints by pro-recall forces led the sponsors to move the session off campus. When recall backers showed up at the seminar to complain about institute involvement, fights erupted between union members and the protesters.

ILE officials vigorously deny that the institute had any formal role in the anti-recall efforts. They

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claim, rather, that they had merely intended to make space on campus available for a public meeting, implying that they would have hosted a pro-recall meeting, too—a dubious contention. Staff members, ILE reps added, were participating on their own time.

Whatever the truth may be, this controversy is merely the labor institute's latest. The California State Legislature founded the ILE a couple of years ago, at the unions' urging, for the ostensible purpose of conducting research on the state's economy and working people. In its brief history, however, it has used money granted to it by the cash-strapped state—including $4 million this year—to sponsor such dubious and partisan projects as training local union workers to dig up dirt on major property owners and investors, studying ways to organize young workers in California's supermarket industry, and researching how best to fight the privatization of welfare services.

This kind of campus labor advocacy is coming under increasing fire. In August, after some professors complained that politics was intruding on scholarship, UCLA's administration disavowed a "study" of worker health-care benefits at a local Indian casino that a group working under the ILE umbrella had sponsored. And earlier in the summer, the Pacific Research Foundation, a California free-market think tank, awarded the ILE its Golden Fleece prize for wasting public money on projects like "Making People Pro-Union," a politicized study that cost the taxpayers $20,000.

The ILE was understandably anxious to rout the recall. Governor Davis and the Democratic-led California State Legislature were the ILE's biggest friends. But the fat public funding for projects of questionable academic value is unlikely to survive in the new Schwarzenegger era—along with the fat public funding for unneeded layers of unionized government employees.

—*Steven Malanga*

See-No-Evil Journalists

One honest reporter tells the truth about his colleagues in Iraq.

John Burns, the *New York Times*'s Baghdad bureau chief, filed the most lucid, responsible, and valorous dispatches from the war in Iraq, reminding us of what great reporting the *Times*, with its unmatched resources, is still fitfully capable of when it isn't pushing its left-wing agenda in its news pages. Those who doubt it should have a look at an outstanding new anthology, *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq, an Oral History*, edited by Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson.

Under extraordinarily hazardous conditions (Saddam's troops briefly held him and threatened his life), Burns continued to file story after story, pointing out how successfully the war was going, and how warmly Iraqis greeted American troops—often directly contradicting the editorial position of his own newspaper, which sought to portray the war as negatively as possible.

Looking back, Burns quarrels with the Bush administration's stance that the *casus belli* was Iraq's still-undiscovered weapons of mass destruction. But he also writes with extraordinary and impassioned eloquence of the abattoir that was Saddam's Iraq, where the state tortured and murdered countless Iraqi citizens, children included. "This war," Burns reckons, "could have been justified any time on the basis of human rights, alone."

The *Times*man concludes that a "central truth" had to be "told about this place. It was also the essential truth that was untold by the vast majority of correspondents here. Why? Because they judged that the only way they could keep themselves in play here was to pretend that it was all okay."

In a word: access. In two words: selling out. Burns is loath to name names; for the most part he merely recalls Iraq's blacklist of "unfriendly" reporters—that is, those like Burns who wrote about what they saw. But there was also a white list of tame journalists: "In one case, a correspondent actually printed out copies of his and other people's stories—mine included—in order to be able to show the difference between himself and others. He wanted to show what a good boy he was compared to this enemy of the state. He was with a major American newspaper."

The worst of the pseudo-journalists collaborated in mendacity for access to Iraq's major players. The *quid pro quo* for such interviews: the reporters had to write "as if they were in Belgium." The BBC was among these journalistic enterprises; so was CNN, whose director, Eason Jordan,

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admitted publicly that his network—the same one that gave you Peter Arnett back in the first Gulf War—routinely hid the truth about Saddam's murderous thugs.

Burns's employers remain distinctly unenthusiastic about any news that might cast a favorable light on the war in Iraq. The *Times* recently ran an interesting headline: IN A POLL, BAGHDAD RESIDENTS CALL FREEDOM WORTH THE PRICE. The item reported new Gallup research showing that some 67 percent of Baghdad's residents believe that ousting Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do—big news, indeed, since the findings represented the first major polling done in Iraq.

The trouble was, that item was at the bottom of page 16. The *Times*'s front page carried articles about George Bush's speech to the U.N., calling him "an American president weakened by plunging approval ratings at home, facing a tough security situation in Iraq where American soldiers are dying every week, and confronted by the beginnings of a revolt against the American timetable for self-rule."

As Burns took pains to point out, Iraq was and is a roiled and difficult place, hard to administer and pacify in so brief a time. Yet in overwhelming numbers the Iraqis themselves wanted Saddam gone—for very good reasons—and they have had no hesitation in saying so. Even though this is a difficult pill for the antiwar, anti-Bush journalists and editors to swallow, they're paid to report the truth. And the truth is that Iraq is not Belgium, and that the U.S. effort is far from the failure they seem to desire.

—*Stefan Kanfer*

I'm Outta Here

Residents continue fleeing Gotham—and New York State.

During the recent debate over how to close New York's budget gap, Mayor Michael Bloomberg argued that raising taxes wouldn't hurt the city, since it is such a great place that people will clamor to live there, whatever it costs. The mayor should look hard at new Census Bureau statistics: even before he hiked taxes, people were fleeing the city.

From 1995 through 2000, a period of economic growth, 1.37 million New Yorkers left the city, while only 825,904 residents came here from somewhere else in the U.S.: a net loss of 545,269 people. Brooklyn had the biggest drain, down a net 233,555 residents. Yet even Manhattan, the place that New York mythology likes to describe as irresistibly attractive to all the right people, suffered a net loss of more than 57,000 U.S. residents. Only Staten Island, the least hip of the city's boroughs, wound up on the plus side, attracting 1,470 more U.S. residents than it lost. The sole bit of "good" news for the city as a whole: the *rate* of out-migration seems to have slowed somewhat from the late 1980s.

Even that mildly good news may be premature, though: the census figures don't include the post-9/11 period. Fears of terrorism, together with a rockier economy, have made the city even more unappealing, according to the Brookings Institute's preliminary analysis of census data, which suggests that Gotham's out-migration rate may have sped up since the terror attack.

Not only are people getting out of the city; they're leaving the state too. New York State suffered the greatest net loss of U.S. residents of any state from 1995 through 2000—down 874,248 people. That outdid the second-biggest loser, California, by more than 100,000 residents. New York and California alone accounted for 55 percent of the net loss of all states that experienced out-migration. Both states' out-migration rates, moreover, are accelerating—in New York's case, partly because of a huge exodus from Erie (down 41,115), Monroe (down 32,858), and Onandaga (down 22,755) Counties.

This massive loss of population is a key reason that New York and California have faced greater budget woes than most states. Only an influx of foreign immigrants has kept these two states from even bigger population losses. The vast majority of these foreign-born newcomers, however, are poor, ill-educated, and unskilled, while many of those leaving are well educated and well paid. New York State surrendered $2.7 billion in household income to New Jersey alone between 1992 and 1997, thanks to better-off residents fleeing there, an Empire Foundation report observes.

While the census study does not say what

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propels such massive out-migration, job-killing taxes are a likely culprit. Most of the states joining California and New York on the list of losers—including Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio—also have among the heaviest state and local tax burdens in the U.S., with Gotham being one of the country's highest-taxed places to live. Most of the states that had the greatest net gain in residents, by contrast, have low taxes, with four—Florida, Nevada, Texas, and Washington—having no personal income tax at all.

—Steven Malanga

Medicaid Madness

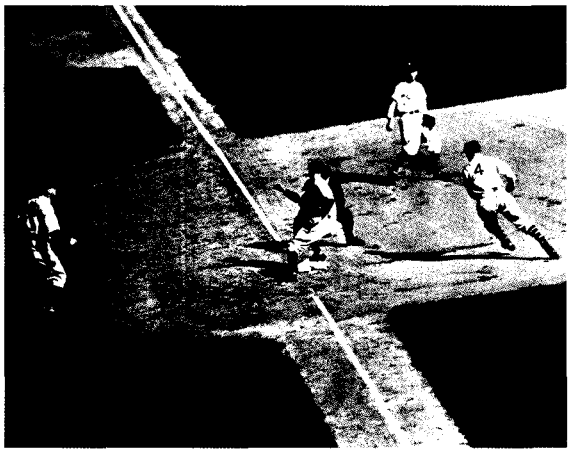
Empire State lawmakers keep showering money on health-care workers.

Paying for scores of services and procedures that other states wouldn't dream of covering, New York State's Medicaid outlays are soaring out of sight, squeezing state and local budgets. Empire State Medicaid spending, likely to increase by more than 8 percent to nearly $42 billion in the current fiscal year, is already the highest in the country—a full one-third more than runner-up California, a state with 15 million more residents. New York Medicaid costs have ballooned by $13 billion since Albany passed a health-care "reform" act four years ago, supposedly to restrain spending.

Unlike most other states, localities in New York must pay half of the state share of Medicaid, so their costs are skyrocketing, too. New York City's contribution to Medicaid, now over $3 billion a year, has been rising at more than 7 percent annually. Upstate Erie County's Medicaid expenditures increased by $16 million last year to $153 million, contributing to a $35 million county budget deficit. The county projects another jump of about $15 million this year.

The crippling costs on municipalities prompted Eric County Executive Joel Giambra and neighboring Chautauqua County Executive Mark Thomas to launch a petition to demand that Albany legislators grant Medicaid relief to the counties. The local politicians hope that New York State taxpayers, who, thanks mostly to the Medicaid expenditures, already pay the highest combined local and state levies in the country—a whopping $7,500 per capita annually, nearly 50 percent above the national average—will send the message that enough is enough.

Overtaxed citizens will have to yell pretty loudly to gain any attention in Albany, however,



since legislators worry more about pleasing the powerful health-care lobby than restraining costs. Four years ago, state legislators gave health-care workers' union boss Dennis Rivera several big gifts in the state's health-care "reform" act, including a $58 million-a-year state-financed health insurance plan for private-sector home–health-care workers—most of them members of Rivera's union. Then, this September, after Rivera complained that the program was running out of money, the Solons generously anted up tens of millions in new funds for it. The program will reportedly now cost over $163 million annually—more than $100 million above initial projections. This joins the $2.7 billion that Governor George Pataki and state pols sent Rivera's way in January of 2003 so that hospitals could use public money to give raises to their private-sector workers.

No end seems in sight to this upward spiral. While health-care costs have risen nationwide, other states have moved to impose some restraint. New York's deliberate expansion of its Medicaid program, by sharp contrast, is pushing the state and its localities toward financial ruin.

—Steven Malanga

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Soundings

Sleeping on Grates?

Child poverty did not increase during the economic downturn.

Economic news during a downturn never brings much cheer, and Census Bureau income figures for 2002 prove no exception: more Americans were poor, and overall they were earning less. But looking beyond these expected trends, you find something truly remarkable: single mothers and their children, the group most likely to suffer increases in poverty during earlier economic downturns, have escaped relatively unscathed during this one.

This is an exceedingly important development. Child poverty has been the most recalcitrant and troubling of our economic problems. A disproportionate number of poor people are under 18: though children represent only about a quarter of the total population, they make up more than one-third of the poor. During bad economic times, the number of poor children historically rises—often substantially. According to the Brookings Institute's Gary Burtless, in the two recession years following 1979, child poverty rose by 3.4 percentage points. The downturn of the early 1990s saw child poverty bump up 2.2 percentage points.

The recession of 2001–02 broke that pattern. True, child poverty did rise in 2002—but only by half a percentage point, small enough for the Census Bureau to consider it "unchanged from 2001." Even after two years of a limping economy, the rate of child poverty stood at 16.7 percent, quite close to the low point reached in 2000 after the strong economy of the mid- and late 1990s.

Even more striking, however, are the trends among poor black kids. In previous recessions, black children have taken the hardest hits. But in 2001, the first year of the downturn, black child poverty not only did not rise; it plunged to its lowest level in the nation's history. And while in 2002 the rate of black child poverty did not maintain its descent, it did not go up. In other words, during the recession year of 2002, black child poverty remained within a hair's-breadth of its historical low.

What's made the difference in the child-poverty rates? The big answer: welfare reform. At-risk children are less likely to be poor in 2001 than they were in 1991 or 1981 because their mothers are more likely to have jobs—and they are more likely to have jobs because the 1996 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families requires them to work. In 2002, for just about the first time during a bad economy, the poverty rate for single mothers held steady. By contrast, the Census Bureau reports that the poverty rate among married couples increased from 4.9 to 5.3 percent. Meanwhile, welfare caseloads continued their historical decline; by 2002, the rolls were well over 50 percent lower than they were in pre-welfare reform days. Opponents predicated that welfare reform would cast a million children into poverty even in a relatively strong economy; a recession, they claimed, would result in a Dickensian catastrophe. But things have turned out very differently.

Welfare reform isn't the whole explanation, of course. For one thing, this recession was relatively mild. Unemployment never went much above 6 percent, compared with over 7 percent during the early 1990s. Lower-income workers have also benefited from the Earned Income Tax Credit, which boosts their take-home pay.

Despite the good news about former welfare mothers and their children, moreover, there is still plenty to worry about in the Census Bureau report. Despite the improved prospects for single mothers, their children remain at a far higher risk of poverty than children in married-couple families. And there's not much heartening news on that front: while the out-of-wedlock birth rate is no longer soaring upward, it has flattened out at 33 percent, near its all-time high.

Future welfare reformers have their work cut out for them.

—Kay S. Hymowitz

The NYPD's Blackout Success

Why was New York so peaceful during the blackout? Good policing.

New Yorkers have been congratulating themselves for the low level of looting during August's blackout. This feel-good story of a kinder, gentler New York leaves out a critical factor behind the city's respect for

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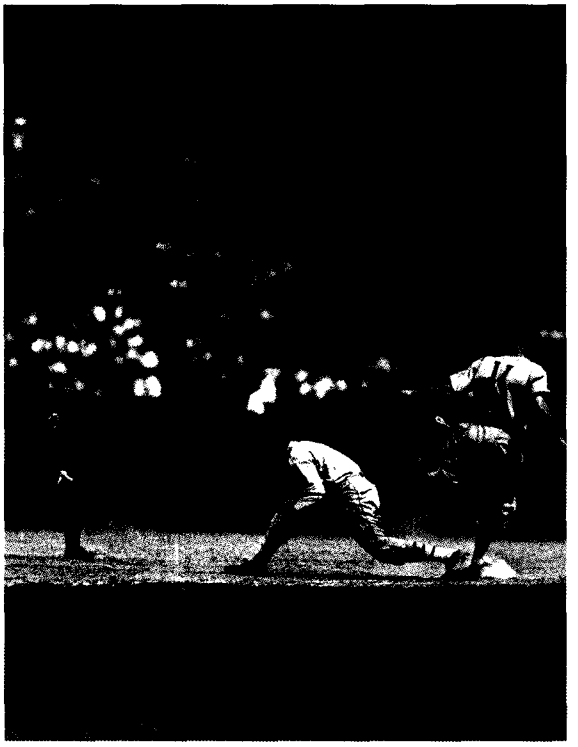
the law during the crisis: a highly trained police department. Had the NYPD not deployed as masterfully as it did during the power failure, many more storeowners would today be counting their losses, and the reputation of New York would not be riding as high.

Looting is the quintessential crime of opportunity, and the police made sure to deny would-be looters their big chance. When the first window shattered on Brooklyn's Flatbush Avenue, less than five minutes after the lights went out, the department immediately erected barriers along the avenue and maintained a highly visible presence there for the rest of the night. It did the same in other areas hit by thievery during the 1977 blackout, as well as in neighborhoods marked by recent shootings—a sign of a criminally disposed population.

The cops started making arrests soon after the power stopped, and in large numbers—up to two-dozen hoodlums at a time. Getting these early-birds in custody stopped them from wreaking further havoc and sent a strong message to copycats that lawlessness would not be tolerated. Admittedly, some of the looters weren't much of a challenge for the police. For example, 23 would-be sneaker thieves cut into the roof of a Brooklyn Foot Locker store and dropped to the floor below, intending to walk out the door with their booty. They hadn't noticed the locked gate blocking their exit. The police picked them up like bugs trapped in a Roach Motel.

Two key strengths allowed the NYPD to protect the city during the darkness: training and manpower. Since September 11, the department has rigorously prepared for a catastrophic attack. When the electricity went off, top brass responded as if it were a terror strike. They gave full authority to the commanders of all eight patrol boroughs: an anti-terror precaution in case One Police Plaza became incapacitated. The NYPD has been drilling this so-called stand-alone plan obsessively, so when a disaster finally struck, commanders knew how to get their officers in the right places quickly. The borough commanders promptly called in all off-duty officers and extended shifts to 12 and 16 hours.

None of this deployment could have happened, however, without a critical mass of officers available to the force. In 1977, the city had 15,000 fewer cops than now, a consequence of its economic meltdown. Disturbingly, the force is once again shrinking, though the losses are nowhere near those of the 1970s. The mayor and city council should take note: numbers matter. They must not let the department drop below its current staffing.



BETTMANN/CORBIS

Liberal criminologists also have a few things to learn from the city's recent relative calm: policing keeps streets safe. The academic world continues to deny the role of policing in New York's record-breaking crime drop in the 1990s, wedded to the idea that only social services and full employment can affect crime.

While the true story of why New York was spared the paroxysm of lawlessness seen in 1977 may not be as heartwarming as the hypothesis of a suddenly respectful, law-abiding populace, it should be just as reassuring for New Yorkers to know that their police force responds so capably to catastrophe.

—Heather Mac Donald

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We're Not Losing the Culture Wars Anymore

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COURTESY OF FOX NEWS

Fox News offers viewers a powerful and popular alternative to knee-jerk network orthodoxy.

Why conservative ideas are everywhere.

Brian C. Anderson

The Left's near monopoly over the institutions of opinion and information—which long allowed liberal opinion makers to sweep aside ideas and beliefs they disagreed with, as if they were beneath argument—is skidding to a startlingly swift halt. The transformation has gone far beyond the rise of conservative talk radio, that, ever since Rush Limbaugh's debut 15 years ago, has chipped away at the power of the *New York Times*, the networks, and the rest of the elite media to set the terms of the nation's political and cultural debate. Almost overnight, three huge changes in communications have injected conservative ideas right into the heart of that debate. Though commentators have noted each of these changes separately, they haven't sufficiently grasped how, taken together, they add up to a revolution: no longer can the Left keep conservative views out of the mainstream or dismiss them with bromide instead of argument. Everything has changed.

The first and most visible of these three seismic events: the advent of cable TV, especially Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Channel. Since its 1996 launch, Fox News has provided what its visionary CEO Roger Ailes calls a "haven" for viewers fed up with the liberal bias of the news media—potentially a massive audience, since the mainstream media stand well to the American people's left.

Watch Fox for just a few hours and you encounter a conservative presence unlike anything on TV. Where CBS and CNN would lead a news

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item about an impending execution with a candlelight vigil of death-penalty protesters, for instance, at Fox "it is *de rigueur* that we put in the lead why that person is being executed," senior vice president for news John Moody noted a while back. Fox viewers will see Republican politicians and conservative pundits sought out for meaningful quotations, skepticism voiced about environmentalist doomsaying, religion treated with respect, pro-life views given airtime—and much else they'd never find on other networks.

Fox's conservatism helps it scoop competitors on stories they get wrong or miss entirely because of liberal bias. In April 2002, for instance, the mainstream media rushed to report an Israeli "massacre" of Palestinian civilians in a refugee camp in the West Bank city of Jenin; Fox uniquely—and correctly, it turned out—treated the massacre charge with complete skepticism. "We try to avoid falling for the conventional liberal wisdom in journalistic circles—in this case the conventional wisdom 'Israeli bad, Palestinian good,'" says daytime anchorman David Asman. "Too often ideology shapes the tendency to jump to a conclusion—something we try to be aware of in our own case, too."

Nowhere does Fox differ more radically from the mainstream television and press than in its robustly pro-U.S. coverage of the War on Terror. After September 11, the American flag appeared everywhere, from the lapels of the anchormen to the corner of the screen. Ailes himself wrote to President Bush, urging him to strike back hard against al-Qaida. On-air personalities and reporters freely referred to "our" troops instead of "U.S. forces," and Islamist "terrorists" and "evildoers" instead of "militants." Such open displays of patriotism are anathema to today's liberal journalists, who see "taking sides" as a betrayal of journalistic objectivity.

Asman demurs. For the free media to take sides against an enemy bent on eradicating the free society itself, he argues, isn't unfair or culturally biased; it is the only possible logical and moral stance. And to call bin Ladin a "militant," as Reuters does, is to betray the truth, not uphold it. "Terrorism is terrorism," Asman says crisply. "We know what it is, and we know how to define it, just as our viewers know what it is. So we're not going to play with them: when we see an act of terror, we're going to call it terror." On television news, anyway, Fox alone seemed to grasp this essential point from September 11 on. Says Asman: "CNN, MSNBC, the media generally were not declarative enough in calling a spade a spade."

Fox's very tone conveys its difference from the networks' worldview. "Fox News lacks the sense of out-of-touch elitism that makes many Americans, whatever their politics, annoyed with the news media," maintains media critic Gene Veith. "Fox reporters almost never condescend to viewers," he observes. "The other networks do so all the time, peering down on the vulgar masses from social height (think Peter Jennings) or deigning to enlighten the public about things that only they understand (think Peter Arnett)." This tone doesn't mark only Fox's populist shows, like pugnacious superstar Bill O'Reilly's. Even when Fox goes upscale, in Brit Hume's urbane nightly *Special Report*, for example, the civility elevates rather than belittles the viewer. For Ailes, Fox's anti-elitism is key. "There's a whole country that elitists will never acknowledge," he told the *New York Times Magazine*. "What people resent deeply out there are those in the 'blue' states thinking they're smarter."

The "fair and balanced" approach that Fox trumpets in its slogan is part of this iconoclastic tone, too. Sure, the anchor is almost always a conservative, but it's clear he is striving to tell the truth, and there's always a liberal on hand, too. By contrast, political consultant and Fox contributor Dick Morris notes, "The other networks offer just one point of view, which they claim is objective." Not only does the Fox approach make clear that there is always more than one point of view, but it also puts the network's liberal guests in the position of having to defend their views—something that almost never happens on other networks.

Viewers clearly like what they see. Fox's ratings, already climbing since the station debuted in 1996, really began to rocket upward after the terrorist attack and blasted into orbit with Operation Iraqi Freedom. "In the Iraqi war," Dick Mor-

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ris explains, "the viewing audience truly saw how incredibly biased the other networks were: 'Turkey did not let us through, the plan was flawed, we attacked with too few troops, our supply lines weren't secure, the army would run out of rations and ammo, the Iraqis would use poison gas, the oil wells would go up in flames, there would be street-to-street fighting in Baghdad, the museum lost its priceless artifacts to looters,' and now we're onto this new theme that 'Iraq is a quagmire' and that there 'aren't any weapons of mass destruction' and that 'Bush lied'—and all the while, thanks in part to Fox News, Americans are seeing with their own eyes how much this is crazy spin." The yawning gulf separating reality and the mainstream media during the war and its aftermath, Morris believes, "will kill the other networks in the immediate future—to Fox's benefit."

"This June, Fox won 51 percent of the prime-time cable news audience—more than CNN and MSNBC *combined*."

The numbers make clear just how stunning Fox's rise has been. Starting with access to only 17 million homes (compared with CNN's 70 million) in 1996, Fox could reach 65 million homes by 2001 and had already started to turn a profit. A year later, profits hit $70 million and are expected to double in 2003. Though CNN founder Ted Turner once boasted he'd "squish Murdoch like a bug," Fox News has outpaced its chief cable news rival in the ratings since September 11 and now runs laps around it. This past June, Fox won a whopping 51 percent of the prime-time cable news audience—more than CNN, CNN Headline News, and MSNBC *combined*. The station's powerhouse, *The O'Reilly Factor*, averages around 3 million viewers every night, and during Operation Iraqi Freedom the "No Spin Zone" drew as many as 7 million on a given night; CNN's Larry King, once the king of cable, has slipped to 1.3 million nightly viewers. Cheery *Fox and Friends* has even edged out CBS's *Early Show* in the ratings a few times, despite the fact that CBS is free, while Fox is available only on cable and satellite (and not every operator carries it). While the total viewership for ABC, CBS, and NBC news—more than 25 million—still dwarfs Fox's viewers, the networks are hemorrhaging. CBS News just suffered its lousiest ratings period ever, down 600,000 viewers; 1.1 million fewer people watch the three network news programs today than 12 months ago.

Fox enjoys especially high numbers among advertiser-coveted 25- to 54-year-old viewers, and it is attracting even younger news junkies. As one CNN producer admits, Fox is "more in touch with the younger age group, not just the 25–54 demo, but probably the 18-year-olds." Even more attractive to advertisers, Fox viewers watch 20 to 25 minutes before clicking away; CNN watchers stay only ten minutes. Fox's typical viewer also makes more money on average—nearly $60,000 a year—than those of its main cable rivals.

Not only conservatives like what they see. A new Pew Research Center survey shows that, of the 22 percent of Americans who now get most of their news from Fox (compared with a combined 32 percent for the networks), only 46 percent call themselves "conservative," only slightly higher than the 40 percent of CNN fans who do so. Fox is thus exposing many centrists (32 percent of Fox's regular viewers) and liberals (18 percent) to conservative ideas and opinions they would not regularly find elsewhere in the television news—and some of those folks could be liking the conservative worldview as well as the professionalism of the staff and veracity of the programming.

The news isn't the only place on cable where conservatives will feel at home. Lots of cable comedy, while not traditionally conservative, is fiercely anti-liberal, which as a practical matter often amounts nearly to the same thing. Take *South Park*, Comedy Central's hit cartoon series, whose heroes are four crudely animated and impossibly foul-mouthed fourth-graders named

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Cartman, Kenny (until his demise), Kyle, and Stan. Now in its seventh season, *South Park*, with nearly 3 million viewers per episode, is Comedy Central's highest-rated program.

Many conservatives have attacked *South Park* for its exuberant vulgarity, calling it "twisted," "vile trash," a "threat to our youth." Such denunciations are misguided. Conservative critics should pay closer attention to what *South Park* so irreverently jeers at and mocks. As the show's co-creator, 32-year-old Matt Stone, sums it up: "I hate conservatives, but I really fucking hate liberals."

Not for nothing has blogger and former *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan praised the show for being "the best antidote to PC culture we have." *South Park* sharpens the iconoclastic, anti-PC edge of earlier cartoon shows like *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill*, and spares no sensitivity. The show's single black kid is called Token. One episode, "Cripple Fight," concludes with a slugfest between the boys' wheelchair-bound, cerebral-palsy-stricken friend Timmy and the obnoxious Jimmy, who wants to be South Park's Number One "handi-capable" citizen (in his cringe-making PC locution). In another, "Rainforest Schmainforest," the boys' school sends them on a field trip to Costa Rica, led by an activist choir group, "Getting Gay with Kids," which wants to raise youth awareness about "our vanishing rain forests." Shown San José, Costa Rica's capital, the boys are unimpressed:

> *Cartman* [holding his nose]: Oh my God, it smells like ass out here!
> *Choir teacher*: All right, that does it! Eric Cartman, you respect other cultures this instant.
> *Cartman*: I wasn't saying anything about their culture, I was just saying their city smells like ass.

But if the city is unpleasant, the rain forest itself is a nightmare: the boys get lost, wilt from the infernal heat, face deadly assaults from monstrous insects and a giant snake, run afoul of revolutionary *banditos*, and—worst of all—must endure the

COURTESY OF COMEDY CENTRAL

Like much cable TV comedy, *South Park* relentlessly mocks political correctness.

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choir teacher's New-Agey gushing: "Shhh! Children! Let's try to listen to what the rain forest tells us, and if we use our ears, she can tell us so many things." By the horrifying trip's end, the boys are desperate for civilization, and the choir teacher herself has come to despise the rain forest she once worshiped: "You go right ahead and plow down this whole fuckin' thing," she tells a construction worker.

The episode concludes with the choir's new song:

Doo doo doo doo doo. Doo doo doo wa.
There's a place called the rain forest that truly sucks ass.
Let's knock it all down and get rid of it fast.
You say "save the rain forest" but what do you know?
You've never been there before.
Getting Gay with Kids is here
To tell you things you might not like to hear.
You only fight these causes 'cause caring sells.
All you activists can go fuck yourselves.

As the disclaimer before each episode states, the show is so offensive "it should not be viewed by anyone."

One of the contemporary Left's most extreme (and, to conservatives, objectionable) strategies is its effort to draw the mantle of civil liberties over behavior once deemed criminal, pathological, or immoral, as a brilliant *South Park* episode featuring a visit to town by the North American Man-Boy Love Association—the ultra-radical activist group advocating gay sex with minors—satirizes:

NAMBLA leader [speaking at a group meeting, attended by the *South Park* kids]: Rights? Does anybody know their rights? You see, I've learned something today. Our forefathers came to this country because they believed in an idea. An idea called "freedom." They wanted to live in a place where a group couldn't be prosecuted for their beliefs. Where a person can live the way he chooses to live. You see us as being perverted because we're different from you. People are afraid of us, because they don't understand. And sometimes it's easier to persecute than to understand.
Kyle: Dude. You have sex with children.
NAMBLA leader: We are human. Most of us didn't even choose to be attracted to young boys. We were born that way. We can't help the way we are, and if you all can't understand that, well, then, I guess you'll just have to put us away.
Kyle [slowly, for emphasis]: Dude. You have sex. With children.
Stan: Yeah. You know, we believe in equality for everybody, and tolerance, and all that gay stuff, but dude, fuck you.

Another episode—"Cherokee Hair Tampons"—ridicules multiculti sentimentality about holistic medicine and the "wisdom" of native cultures. Kyle suffers a potentially fatal kidney disorder, and his clueless parents try to cure it with "natural" Native American methods, leaving their son vomiting violently and approaching death's door:

Kyle's mom: Everything is going to be fine, Stan; we're bringing in Kyle tomorrow to see the Native Americans personally.
Stan: Isn't it possible that these Indians don't know what they're talking about?
Stan's mom: You watch your mouth, Stanley. The Native Americans were raped of their land and resources by white people like us.
Stan: And that has something to do with their medicines because . . . ?
Stan's mom: *Enough*, Stanley!

South Park regularly mocks left-wing celebrities who feel entitled to pontificate on how the nation should be run. In one of the most brutal parodies, made in just several days during the 2000 Florida recount fiasco, loudmouth Rosie O'Donnell sweeps into town to weigh in on a kindergarten election dispute involving her nephew. The boys' teacher dresses her down: "People like you preach tolerance and open-mindedness all the time, but when it comes to middle America, you think we're all evil and stupid country yokels who need your political enlightenment. Just because you're on TV doesn't mean you

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know crap about the government."

South Park has satirized the sixties counterculture (Cartman has feverish nightmares about hippies, who "want to save the earth, but all they do is smoke pot and smell bad"); anti-big-business zealots (a "Harbucks" coffee chain opens in South Park, to initial resistance but eventual acclaim as everyone—including the local coffee house's owners—admits its bean beats anything previously on offer in the town); sex ed in school (featuring "the Sexual Harassment Panda," an outrageous classroom mascot); pro-choice extremists (Cartman's mother decides she wants to abort him, despite the fact that he's eight years old, relying on the "it's my body" argument); hate-crime legislation, anti-discrimination lawsuits, gay scout leaders, and much more. Conservatives do not escape the show's satirical sword—gun-toting rednecks and phony patriots have been among those slashed. But there should be no mistaking the deepest thrust of *South Park*'s politics.

"Dennis Miller's 2003 HBO comedy special *The Raw Feed* relentlessly derides liberal shibboleths."

That anti-liberal worldview dominates other cable comedy too. Also on Comedy Central is *Tough Crowd with Colin Quinn*, a new late-night chatfest where the conversation—on race, terrorism, war, and other topics—is anything but politically correct. The Brooklyn-born Quinn, a former anchor on *Saturday Night Live*'s "Weekend Update" and a Fox News fan, can be Rumsfeldesque in his comic riffs, like this one deriding excessive worries about avoiding civilian casualties in Iraq: "This war is so polite," he grumbles. "We used to be *Semper Fi*. Next, we'll be dropping comment cards over Iraq saying 'How did you hear about us?' And 'Would you say that we're a country that goes to war sometimes, often, or never?'"

Then there's Dennis Miller, another *Saturday Night Live* alum, whose 2003 HBO stand-up comedy special *The Raw Feed* relentlessly derides liberal shibboleths. In his stream-of-consciousness rants, whose cumulative effect gets audiences roaring with laughter, Miller blasts the teachers' unions for opposing vouchers, complains about the sluggish work habits of government workers ("ironically, in our highly driven culture, it would appear the only people *not* interested in pushing the envelope are postal employees"), and attacks opponents of Alaskan oil-drilling for "playing the species card."

Miller, like Quinn, is unapologetically hawkish in the War on Terror. Dismissing the effectiveness of U.N. weapons inspectors in the run-up to the Iraq war, he says: "Watching the U.N. in action makes you want to give Ritalin to a glacier." On war opponents France and Germany, he's acid: "The French are always reticent to surrender to the wishes of their friends and always more than willing to surrender to the wishes of their enemies" and "Maybe Germany didn't want to get involved in this war because it wasn't on a grand enough scale." Lately, he's been campaigning with President Bush, crediting W. for making him "proud to be an American again" after the "wocka-wocka porn guitar of the Clinton administration." Fox has hired him to do weekly news commentary.

Why is cable and satellite TV less uniformly *Whoopi* or *West Wing* than ABC, CBS, and NBC? With long-pent-up market demand for entertainment that isn't knee-jerk liberal in its sensibilities, cable's multiplicity of channels has given writers and producers who don't fit the elite media mold the chance to meet that demand profitably.

Andrew Sullivan dubs the fans of all this cable-nurtured satire "South Park Republicans"—people who "believe we need a hard-ass foreign policy and are extremely skeptical of political correctness" but also are socially liberal on many issues, Sullivan explains. Such South Park Republicanism is a real trend among younger Americans, he observes: *South Park*'s

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typical viewer, for instance, is an advertiser-ideal 28.

Talk to right-leaning college students, and it's clear that Sullivan is onto something. Arizona State undergrad Eric Spratling says the definition fits him and his Republican pals perfectly. "The label is really about rejecting the image of conservatives as uptight squares—crusty old men or nerdy kids in blue blazers. We might have long hair, smoke cigarettes, get drunk on weekends, have sex before marriage, watch R-rated movies, cuss like sailors—and also happen to be conservative, or at least libertarian." Recent Stanford grad Craig Albrecht says most of his young Bush-supporter friends "absolutely cherish" *South Park*–style comedy "for its illumination of hypocrisy and stupidity in all spheres of life." It just so happens, he adds, "that most hypocrisy and stupidity take place within the liberal camp."

Further supporting Sullivan's contention, Gavin McInnes, co-founder of Vice—a "punk-rock-capitalist" entertainment corporation that publishes the hipster bible *Vice* magazine, produces CDs and films, runs clothing stores, and claims (plausibly) to have been "deep inside the heads of 18–30s for the past 10 years"—spots "a new trend of young people tired of being lied to for the sake of the 'greater good.'" Especially on military matters, McInnes believes, many twenty-somethings are disgusted with the Left. The knee-jerk Left's days "are numbered," McInnes tells *The American Conservative*. "They are slowly but surely being replaced with a new breed of kid that isn't afraid to embrace conservatism."

Polling data indicate that younger voters are indeed trending rightward—supporting the Iraq war by a wider majority than their elders, viewing school vouchers favorably, and accepting greater restrictions on abortion, such as parental-notification laws (though more accepting of homosexuality than older voters). Together with the Foxification of cable news, this new attitude among the young, reflected in the hippest cable comedy (and in cutting-edge cable dramas such as FX's *The Shield* and HBO's *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*, which are unflinchingly honest about crime, race, sex, and faith, and avoid the saccharine liberal moralizing of much network entertainment), can only make Karl Rove happy.

What should make him positively giddy is the rise of the Internet, the second explosive change shaking liberal media dominance. It's hard to overstate the impact that news and opinion websites like the *Drudge Report*, *NewsMax*, and Dow Jones's *OpinionJournal* are having on politics and culture, as are current-event "blogs"—individual or group web diaries—like *AndrewSullivan*, *InstaPundit*, and "The Corner" department of *NationalReviewOnline* (*NRO*), where the editors and writers argue, joke around, and call attention to articles elsewhere on the web. This whole universe of web-based discussion has been dubbed the "blogosphere."

While there are several fine left-of-center sites, the blogosphere currently tilts right, albeit idiosyncratically, reflecting the hard-to-pigeonhole politics of some leading bloggers. Like talk radio and Fox News, the right-leaning sites fill a market void. "Many bloggers felt shut out by institutions that have adopted—explicitly or implicitly—a left-wing orthodoxy," says Erin O'Connor, whose blog, *Critical Mass*, exposes campus PC gobbledygook. The orthodox Left's blame-America-first response to September 11 has also helped tilt the blogosphere rightward. "There were damned few noble responses to that cursed day from the 'progressive' part of the political spectrum," avers Los Angeles–based blogger and journalist Matt Welch, "so untold thousands of people just started blogs, in anger," Welch among them. "I was pushed into blogging on September 16, 2001, in direct response to reading five days' worth of outrageous bullshit in the media from people like Noam Chomsky and Robert Jenson."

For a frustrated citizen like Welch, it's easy to get your ideas circulating on the Internet. Start-up costs for a blog are small, printing and mailing costs nonexistent. Few blogs make money, though, since advertisers are leery of the web and no one seems willing to pay to read anything on it.

The Internet's most powerful effect has been to expand vastly the range of opinion—especially

Taken together, the websites that make up the conservative blogosphere are reshaping journalism.

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conservative opinion—at everyone's fingertips. "The Internet helps break up the traditional cultural gatekeepers' power to determine a) what's important and b) the range of acceptable opinion," says former *Reason* editor and libertarian blogger Virginia Postrel. *InstaPundit*'s Glenn Reynolds, a law professor at the University of Tennessee, agrees: "The main role of the Internet and blogosphere is to call the judgment of elites about what is news into question."

The *Drudge Report* is a perfect case in point. Five years since Matt Drudge broke the Monica Lewinsky story, his news and gossip site has become an essential daily visit for political junkies, journalists, media types, and—with 1.4 *billion* hits in 2002—seemingly anyone with an Internet connection. The site features occasional newsworthy items investigated and written by Drudge, but mostly it's an editorial filter, linking to stories on other small and large news and opinion sites—a filter that crucially exhibits no bias against the Right. (Drudge, a registered Republican, calls himself "a pro-life conservative who doesn't want the government to tax me.") The constantly updated cornucopia of information, culled from a vast number of global sources and e-mailed tips from across the political spectrum, says critic Camille Paglia, a *Drudge* enthusiast, point up by contrast "the process of censorship that's going on, the filtering of the news by established news organizations." Other popular news-filter sites, including *Lucianne* and *RealClearPolitics*, perform a similar function.

In a different register, *Arts & Letters Daily*, a site devoted to intellectual journalism, is similarly ecumenical in what it links to, posting articles from publications as diverse as *City Journal* on the Right to the *New Left Review*. When *Arts & Letters* ran into financial trouble last year, both neo-conservative elder Norman Podhoretz and *Nation* columnist Eric Alterman rushed to its defense. Going from 300 page views a day in 1998 to more than 70,000 a day in 2003, and with many left-leaning readers (including a large number of academics), it has introduced a whole new audience to serious conservative thought.

Though not quite in *Drudge*'s league in readership, the top explicitly right-leaning sites, updated daily, have generated huge followings. Andrew Sullivan's blog, launched in the late 90s, attracted 400,000 visitors this July. *FrontPage*, vigorously lambasting political correctness, the antiwar campaign, and other "progressive" follies, draws as many as 1.7 million visitors in a month. More than 1.4 million visitors landed on *OpinionJournal* this past March, when the liberation of Iraq began, most to read editor James Taranto's "Best of the Web Today," an incisive guide to and commentary on the day's top Internet stories. *NRO*, featuring scores of new articles daily, averages slightly over 1 million a month—and over 2 million during the war. "More people read *NRO* than all the conservative magazines combined," the site's editor-at-large Jonah Goldberg marvels. The web's interconnectivity—the fact that bloggers and news and opinion sites readily link to one another and comment on one another's postings, forming a kind of twenty-first-century agora—amplifies and extends the influence of any site that catches the heavy hitters' attention.

It's not just the large numbers of readers that these sites attract that is so significant for the conservative cause; it's also *who* those readers are. Just as Fox News is pulling in a younger viewership, who will reshape the politics of the future, so these conservative sites are proving particularly popular with younger readers. "They think: 'If it's not on the web, it doesn't exist,'" says Goldberg. *FrontPage*'s web traffic shoots up dramatically during the school year, as lots of college students log on.

Equally important, these sites draw the attention of journalists. "Everyone who deals in media—and they're not all ideologues on the Left—is reading the Internet all the time," says *FrontPage* editor David Horowitz. "Michael," who co-authors the *2blowhards* culture-and-politics blog as an avocation while working full time for a major left-leaning national news organization (he uses a pseudonym because his bosses wouldn't like the blog's not-so-liberal opinions), reports: "I notice the younger people on staff in particular are aware of blogs—and that a lot of local newspapers seem to have people who stay on top of blogs, too." The Internet's power, observes Mickey Kaus, the former *New Republic*

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writer whose *Kausfiles* blog has become indispensable reading for anyone interested in politics, "is due primarily to its influence over professional journalists, who then influence the public." Judges Andrew Sullivan: "I think I have just as much ability to inject an idea or an argument into the national debate through my blog as I did through *The New Republic*."

Almost daily, stories that originate on the web make their way into print or onto TV or radio. Fox and Rush Limbaugh, for instance, often pick up stories from *FrontPage* and *OpinionJournal*—especially those on the antiwar Left. Fox News's Sean Hannity surfs the net up to eight hours a day, searching sites like *Drudge* and the hard-right news site *WorldNetDaily* for stories to cover. Phrases introduced in the blogosphere now "percolate out into the real world with amazing rapidity," *InstaPundit*'s Glenn Reynolds recently noted. For example, the day after the humor blog *ScrappleFace* coined the term "Axis of Weasel" to satirize the antiwar alliance of Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder, the *New York Post* used it as a headline, talk radio and CNN and Fox News repeated it, and it soon made its way into French and German media.

"'Everyone who deals in media is reading the Internet all the time,' says *FrontPage* editor David Horowitz."

The speed with which Internet sites can post new material is one source of their influence. No sooner has the latest Paul Krugman *New York Times* column attacking the Bush administration appeared, for example, than the "Krugman Truth Squad"—a collective of conservative economic analysts—will post an article on *NRO* exposing the economist's myriad mistakes, distortions, and evasions. Earlier this year, the Truth Squad caught Krugman comparing the cost of Bush's tax cuts over *ten* years with the *one*-year wage boost associated with the new employment it would create, so as to make the tax reductions seem insanely large for the small benefit they'd bring—a laughably ignorant mistake or, more likely, a deliberate attempt to mislead in order to discredit Bush. The discomfiture web critics have caused Krugman has forced him to respond on his own website, offering various lame rationales for his errors, and denouncing the Truth Squad's Donald Luskin as his "stalker-in-chief."

The timeliness of web publication also means that right from the start a wealth of conservative opinion is circulating about any new development—often before the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* get a chance to weigh in. A blog or opinion site "can have an influence on elite opinion before the conventional wisdom among elites congeals," notes Nick Schulz, editor of *Tech Central Station*, a site that covers technology and public policy. A case in point is the blogosphere "storm" (a ferocious burst of online argument, with site linking to site linking to site) that made a big issue out of the Democrats' unseemly transformation of Senator Paul Wellstone's funeral into a naked political rally, forcing the mainstream media to cover the story, which in turn created outrage that ultimately may have cost the Dems Wellstone's seat in the 2002 election. Blogosphere outrage over Republican senator Trent Lott's comments that seemed to praise segregation at onetime Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday party, led by *NRO* and other conservative sites keen to liberate modern conservatism from any vestige of racism and to make the GOP a champion of black advancement, shaped the mainstream media's coverage of that controversy, too—helping to push Lott from his perch as majority leader.

Debunking liberal humbug is one of the web's most powerful political effects: bloggers call it the Internet's "bullshit-detector" role. The *New York Times* has been the Number One target of the B.S. detectors—especially during the reign of deposed executive editor and liberal ideologue

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Howell Raines. "Only, say, five years ago, the editors of the *New York Times* had much more power than they have today," Andrew Sullivan points out. "They could spin stories with gentle liberal bias, and only a few eyes would roll." If they made an egregious error, they could bury the correction later. The Internet makes such bias and evasion harder—maybe impossible—to pull off. It was the blogosphere that revealed Enron-bashing Krugman's former ties to Enron, showed how the paper twisted its polls to further a liberal agenda, exposed how it used its front page to place Henry Kissinger falsely in the anti–Iraq war camp, and then, as the war got under way, portrayed it as harshly as possible.

It's safe to say that the blogosphere cost Raines his job. When the story broke about *Times* reporter and Raines favorite Jayson Blair's outrageous fabrications in the paper's pages, Sullivan, Kaus, Drudge, blogger-reporter Seth Mnookin, and other web writers kept it alive, creating pressure for other media, including television, to cover it. When disgruntled *Times* staffers began to leak damning information about Raines's high-handed management style to Jim Romensko's influential media-news site *Poynter*, the end was near. *Kausfiles*'s "Howell Raines-O-Meter," gauging the probability of the editor's downfall, was up barely a day or two when Raines stepped down. "The outcome would have been different without the Internet," Kaus rightly says. The *Times*'s new ombudsman acknowledged the point: "We're not happy that blogs became the forum for our dirty linen, but somebody had to wash it and it got washed."

But the Blair affair was more final straw than primary cause of Raines's fall. Unremitting Internet-led criticism and mockery of the editor's front-page partisanship had already severely tarnished the *Times*'s reputation. It may take the *Times* a while to restore readers' trust: a new Rasmussen poll shows that fewer than half of Americans believe that the paper reliably conveys the truth (while 72 percent find Fox News reliable); circulation is down 5 percent since March 2002.

Other liberal media giants have taken notice. In May, the *Los Angeles Times*'s top editor, John Carroll, fired an e-mail to his troops warning that the paper was suffering from "the perception and the occasional reality that the *Times* is a liberal, 'politically correct' newspaper." In the new era of heightened web scrutiny, Carroll was arguing, you can't just dismiss conservative views but must take them seriously. By the recent recall vote, though, the lesson had evaporated.

The third big change breaking the liberal media stranglehold is taking place in book publishing. Conservative authors long had trouble getting their books released, with only Regnery Books, the Free Press, and Basic Books regularly releasing conservative titles. But following editorial changes during the 1990s, Basic and the Free Press published far fewer conservative-leaning titles, leaving Regnery pretty much alone.

No more. Nowadays, publishers are falling over themselves to bring conservative books to a mainstream audience. "Between now and December," *Publishers Weekly* wrote in July, "scores of books on conservative topics will be published by houses large and small—the most ever produced in a single season. Already, 2003 has been a banner year for such books, with at least one and often two conservative titles hitting *PW*'s best-seller list each week." Joining Regnery in releasing mass-market right-leaning books are two new imprints from superpower publishers, Random House's Crown Forum and an as-yet-untitled Penguin series.

These imprints will publish mostly Ann Coulter–style polemics—one of Crown Forum's current releases, for example, is James Hirsen's *The Left Coast*, a take-no-prisoners attack on Hollywood liberals. But higher-brow conservative books will pour forth over the next six months from Peter Collier's Encounter Books, Ivan R. Dee (publisher of *City Journal* books), the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (it's releasing Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Russia in Collapse*, the Nobel Prize–winner's first book in English in nearly a decade), Yale University Press, Lexington Books, and Spence Books. Other top imprints—from HarperCollins to the University of Chicago Press—are also publishing

With chains like Barnes & Noble (right) happy to sell them, and Internet sites to plug them, conservative books are pouring out.

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books that flout liberal orthodoxy. And Bookspan, which runs the Book-of-the-Month Club, has announced a new conservative book club, headed by a former *National Review* literary editor.

It's no exaggeration to describe this surge of conservative publishing as a paradigm shift. "It would have been unthinkable ten years ago that mainstream publishers would embrace this trend," acknowledges Doubleday editor and author Adam Bellow, who got his start in editing in 1988 at the Free Press, where he and his boss, the late Erwin Glikes, encountered "a tremendous amount of marketplace and institutional resistance" in pushing conservative titles. "There was no conspiracy," avers Crown Forum publisher Steve Ross. "We were culturally isolated on this island of Manhattan, and people tend to publish to people of like mind."

Ross believes that September 11 shook up the publishing world and made it less reflexively liberal. And in fact, many new conservative titles concern the War on Terror. But what really overcame the big New York publishers' liberal prejudices is the oodles of money Washington-based Regnery was making. "We've had a string of best-sellers that is probably unmatched in publishing," Regnery president Marji Ross points out. "We publish 20 to 25 titles a year, and we've had *16* books on the *New York Times* best-seller list over the last four years—including Bernard Goldberg's *Bias*, which spent seven weeks at Number One." Adds Bernadette Malone, a former Regnery editor heading up Penguin's new conservative imprint: "The success of Regnery's books woke up the industry: 'Hello? There's 50 percent of the population that we're underserving, even ignoring. We have an opportunity to talk to these people, figure out what interests them, and put out professional-quality books on topics that haven't been sufficiently explored.'" Bellow puts it more bluntly: "Business rationality has trumped ideological aversion. And that's capitalism."

There's another reason that conservative books are selling: the emergence of conservative talk radio, cable TV, and the Internet. This "right-wing media circuit," as *Publishers Weekly* describes it, reaches millions of potential readers and thus makes the traditional gatekeepers of ideas—above all, the *New York Times Book Review* and the *New York Review of Books*, publications that rarely deign to review conservative titles—increasingly irrelevant in winning an audience for a book.

Ask publisher Peter Collier. After only three years in business, his Encounter Books will make $3 million in profits this year, he says—not bad for an imprint specializing in serious works of history, culture, and political analysis aimed at both conservatives and open-minded liberals. Several Encounter titles have sold in the 35,000 range, and a Bill Kristol–edited volume laying out reasons for war in Iraq has sold over 60,000 copies. Instead of worrying about high-profile reviews in the media mainstream—"I've had God knows how many books published by now, and maybe three reviews in the *New York Times Book Review*," laughs Collier—Encounter sells books by getting its authors discussed on the Internet and interviewed on talk radio, Fox News, and C-Span's ideologically neutral *Book TV*. "A Q & A on *NRO* sells books very, very well," Collier explains. "It's comparable to a major newspaper review." A bold *Drudge Report* headline will move far more copies than even good newspaper reviews, claims Regnery's Marji Ross. A book discussed on *AndrewSullivan* will briefly blast up the Amazon.com best-seller list—even hitting the top five.

Amazon itself is another boon to conservatives, since the Internet giant betrays no ideological bias in selling books. Nor do big chain booksellers like Wal-Mart and Barnes & Noble, where Bill O'Reilly books pile up right next to Michael Moore's latest loony-left rant. "The rise of Amazon and the chain stores has been tremendously liberating for conservatives, because these stores are very much product-oriented businesses," observes David Horowitz. "The independent bookstores are all controlled by leftists, and they're totalitarians—they will not display conservative books, or if they do, they'll hide them in the back." Says Marji Ross: "We have experienced our books being buried or kept in the back room when a store manager or owner opposed their message." She's a big fan of Amazon and the chains.

Amazon's Reader Reviews feature—where readers can post their opinions on books they've read

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and rate them—has helped diminish the authority of elite cultural guardians, too, by creating a truly democratic marketplace of ideas. "I don't think there's ever been a similar review medium—a really broad-based consumers' guide for culture," says *2blowhards* blogger Michael. "I've read some stuff on Amazon that's been as good as anything I've read in the real press."

All these remarkable, brand-new transformations have sent the Left reeling. Fox News especially is driving liberals wild. Former vice president Al Gore likens Fox to an evil right-wing "fifth column," and he yearns to set up a left-wing competitor, as if a left-wing media didn't already exist. Comedian and activist Al Franken's new book *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them* is one long jeremiad against Fox. *Washington Post* media critic Tom Shales calls Fox a "propaganda mill." The Columbia Journalism School's Todd Gitlin worries that Fox "emboldens the right wing to feel justified and confident they can promote their policies." "There's room for conservative talk radio on television," allows CNN anchor Aaron Brown, the very embodiment of the elite journalist with, in Roger Ailes's salty phrase, "a pick up their ass." "But I don't think anyone ought to pretend it's the *New York Times* or CNN," Brown sniffs.

But it's not just Fox: liberals have been poohpoohing all of these developments. Dennis Miller used to be the hippest joker around. Now, complains a critic in the liberal webzine *Salon*, he's "uncomfortably juvenile," exhibiting "the sort of simplistic, reactionary American stance that gives us a bad reputation around the world." The *Boston Globe*'s Alex Beam dismisses the blogosphere with typical liberal *hauteur*: "Welcome to Blogistan, the Internet-based journalistic medium where no thought goes unpublished, no long-out-of-print book goes unhawked, and no fellow 'blogger,' no matter how outré, goes unpraised." And those right-wing books are a danger to society, grouse liberals: their "bile-spewing" authors "have limited background expertise and a great flair for adding fuel to hot issues," claims Norman Provizer, a *Rocky Mountain News* columnist. "The harm is if people start thinking these lightweights are providing heavyweight answers."

Well. The fair and balanced observer will hear in such hysterical complaint and angry foot stamping baffled frustration over the loss of a liberal monoculture, which has long protected the Left from debate—and from the realization that its unexamined ideas are sadly threadbare. "The Left has never before had its point of view challenged and its arguments made fun of and shot full of holes on the public stage," concludes social thinker Michael Novak, who has been around long enough to recognize how dramatically things are changing. Hoover Institute fellow Tod Lindberg agrees: "Liberals aren't prepared for real argument," he says. "Elite opinion is no longer univocal. It engages in real argument in real time." *New York Times* columnist David Brooks even sees the Left falling into despair over the new conservative media that have "cohered to form a dazzlingly efficient delivery system that swamps liberal efforts to get their ideas out."

"A book discussed on *AndrewSullivan* will briefly blast up the Amazon.com best-seller list—even hitting the top five."

Here's what's likely to happen in the years ahead. Think of the mainstream liberal media as one sphere and the conservative media as another. The liberal sphere, which less than a decade ago was still *the* media, is still much bigger than the non-liberal one. But the non-liberal sphere is expanding, encroaching into the liberal sphere, which is both shrinking and breaking up into much smaller sectarian spheres—one for blacks, one for Hispanics, one for feminists, and so on.

It's hard to imagine that this development won't result in a broader national debate—and a more conservative America.

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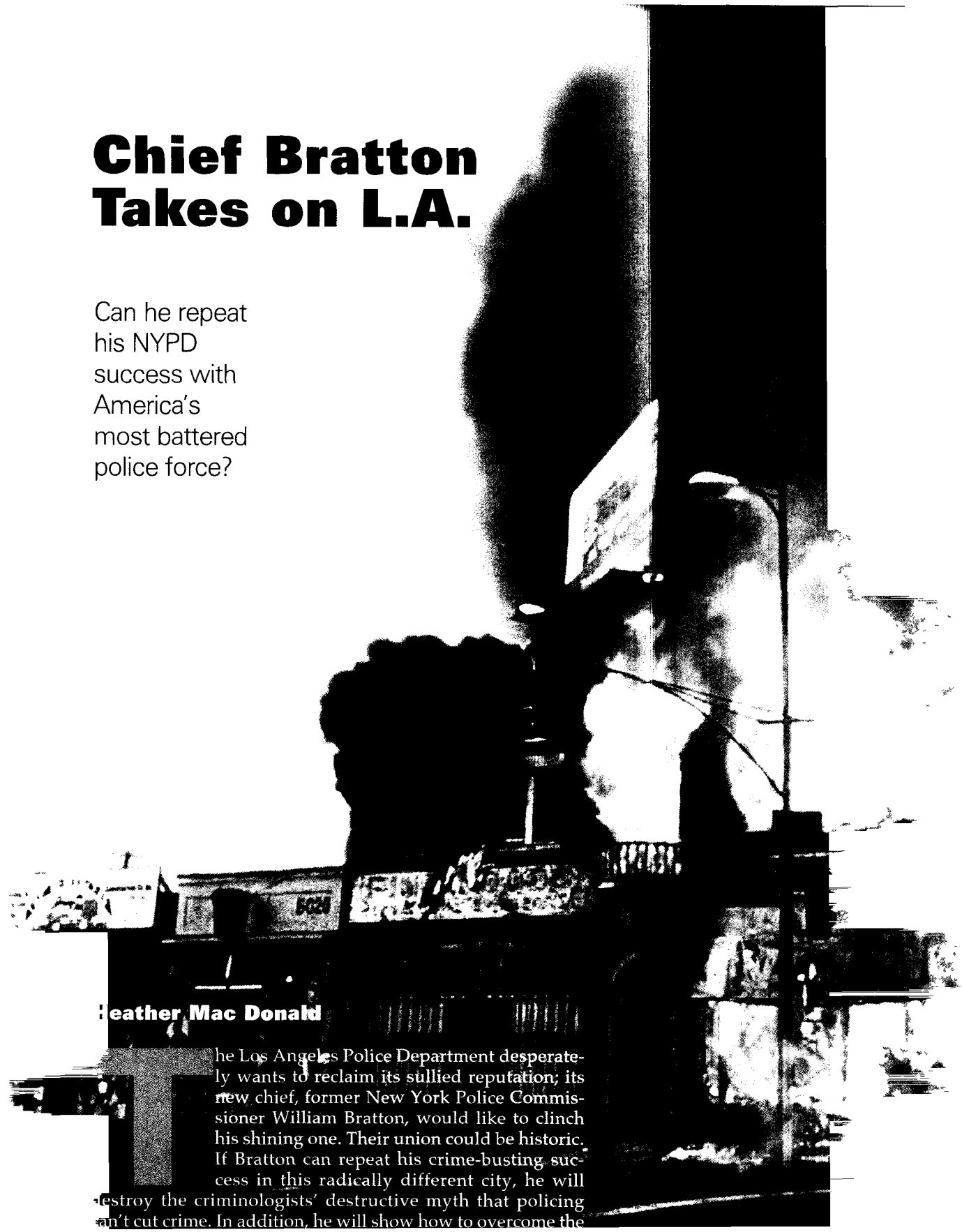
Chief Bratton Takes on L.A.

Can he repeat his NYPD success with America's most battered police force?



Heather Mac Donald

The Los Angeles Police Department desperately wants to reclaim its sullied reputation; its new chief, former New York Police Commissioner William Bratton, would like to clinch his shining one. Their union could be historic. If Bratton can repeat his crime-busting success in this radically different city, he will destroy the criminologists' destructive myth that policing can't cut crime. In addition, he will show how to overcome the

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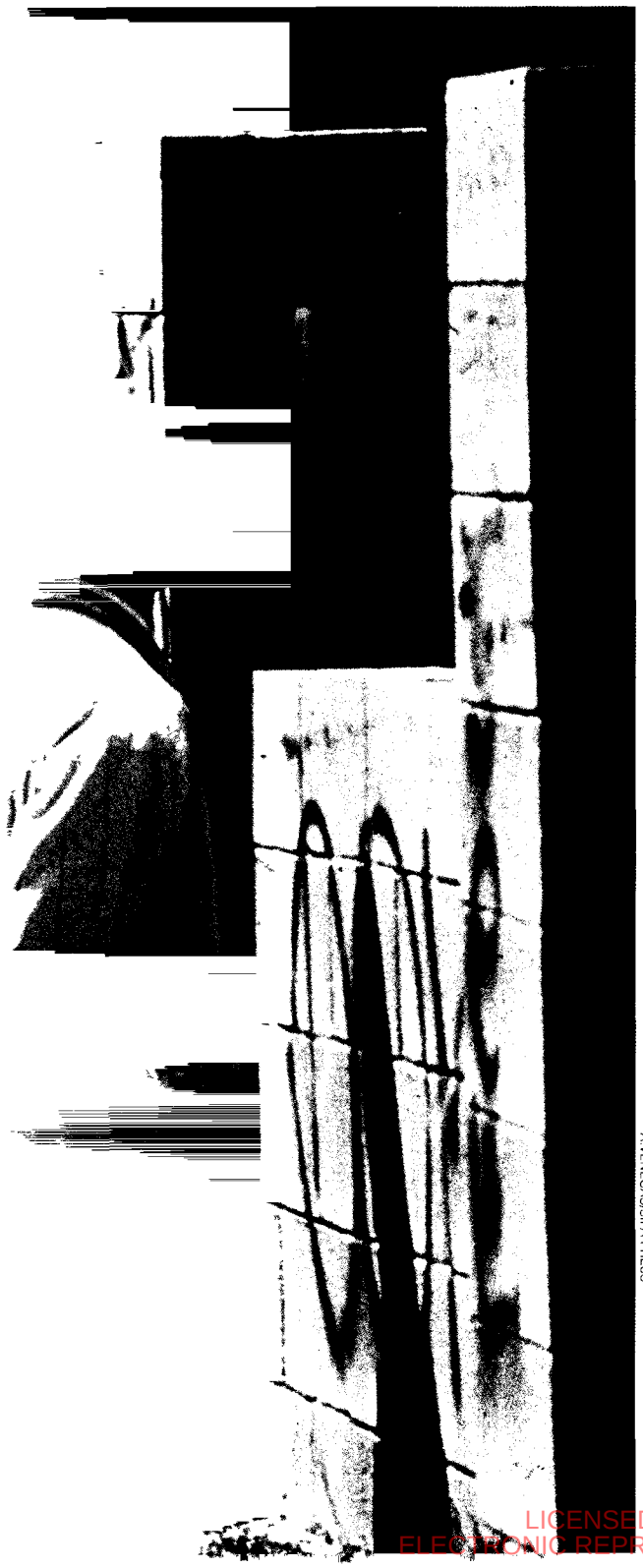

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policing nationwide for the last decade and that brought the once-proud LAPD so low that it forgot its very reason for being.

Today, a dozen years after the 1991 Rodney King beating that—wrongly—made the department a byword for violent, racist policing, the LAPD operates under federal control, subject to rigid management constraints that check a strong chief like Bratton at every turn. Given these restrictions and the department's deep demoralization, no one should underestimate the magnitude of the new chief's task. He himself certainly doesn't. After a particularly murder-soaked week early in his tenure, he asked himself, "'What am I doing here? What the hell is going on here?' The department was messed up, worse than I thought."

Ironically, the LAPD was expressly crafted to prevent its getting messed up in just this way. In the 1950s, when corruption in big-city forces was still the norm, legendary chief William Parker labored to mold a department that the politicians couldn't touch. The result was a corps that for decades commanded respect as the pinnacle of efficient, incorruptible policing. And so it viewed itself. Recalls gang detective Jack Cota: "Our department was based on, 'We're the best; we have integrity.'"

The core challenge of L.A. policing has not changed since Parker's reforms: to cover a huge area with a woefully small force. Angelenos have always balked at funding a police department big enough for its responsibilities, perhaps because most of the tax revenue comes from neighborhoods with little crime: gangbangers don't do drive-by shootings in Bel Air. Today, 9,000 Los Angeles cops police 467 square miles, which works out to 19 cops per square mile. New York's 37,000 officers, by contrast, oversee 321 square miles—115 cops per square mile. So while New York's commanders, with one officer for every 216 residents, can throw manpower at problems,

Morale plunged after police stood by idly while riots raged in 1992 (pages 30 and 31); by the time the LAPD acted (left), loss of life and property was huge.

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their Los Angeles counterparts, with only one officer for every 417 residents, must engage in constant triage.

Chief Parker's no-nonsense solution was to insist that officer quality would trump quantity. He gave cops up-to-the-minute technology and rewarded rapid response time to radio calls. Once on the scene, L.A. officers took control, got the information they needed, and returned to the road as fast as possible, wasting no time schmoozing with the citizenry. The attitude, recalls Hollywood officer Mike Shea, was: "I'm the police; I'll tell you what needs to be done to stop crime in your area; we're the experts; now shut up."

In an era when police authority was far less contested than today, Parker's cops asserted their power more aggressively than most. James Ellroy, author of the novel *L.A. Confidential*, remembers the LAPD of his youth as "buffed and turned out. If you ran, they would beat you up. If you mouthed off, you would get beat up." Even into the eighties, officers would "hijack" murder witnesses and take them to the station house to ensure their testimony, says a longtime LAPD vet.

This command-and-control manner alienated many black residents. And the LAPD, a creature of its time, was no model of racial sensitivity. George Beck, a retired deputy chief who wrote the nation's first police manual for Los Angeles, worked in Watts during the fifties and sixties. "Some cops were really racial," he says; "a lot were not, and some were in the middle." The LAPD was one of the first departments to try to stop crime before it happened by intervening in suspicious behavior; in practice, this meant that "in certain neighborhoods, if you were a black man with another black man, you would automatically be pulled over," recalls Ed Turley, a gang-intervention worker. And cops' behavior during a stop could be egregious: James Ellroy saw two white officers give a black driver a sobriety test in 1971 by making him scratch himself like an ape.

Even so, for years the LAPD rode high in national opinion, promoted tirelessly by its chief as the big blue machine, steely and untouchable. But Parker's public-relations success came back to haunt his beloved agency. A growing army of anti-cop advocates converted his carefully crafted image of the department into an insult, and used it to bludgeon the LAPD into submission, long after the department had ceased in any way to resemble the Parker corps.

Beginning in the late 1970s, cop-hostile politics began to reshape the LAPD. Typically, a politics-induced change would produce unintended negative consequences, which led to an even greater anti-LAPD backlash, in an ever-downward spiral. For instance, in 1981, in response to the emerging politics of "diversity," the department settled a lawsuit by agreeing to hiring quotas for women, blacks, and Hispanics. The result: lower standards of competence, character, and physique—even though the less physical strength an officer has, the more he (or she) will have to rely on weapons to subdue resisting suspects, provoking more excessive-force complaints.

In the same spirit, politics determined tactics. An outcry over civilian deaths from the improper application of the choke-hold, used to incapacitate violent offenders, understandably forced its ban. But without the choke-hold (which police professionals endorse, when used properly), officers had little alternative to the baton when suspects resisted. And use of the baton would provoke an even greater crisis in the Rodney King affair.

Politics shaped the LAPD budget, too. Mayor Tom Bradley loathed Chief Daryl Gates and expressed it by slashing police funding—just as violence between black and Hispanic gangs was exploding in East and South Central L.A. With the crime rate soaring 26 percent from 1984 to 1989, law-abiding citizens demanded a decisive police response.

The logic behind Chief Gates's answer was unimpeachable, though the result was not. Operation Hammer, launched in 1988, would compensate for the chronic manpower shortage by temporarily flooding high-crime areas with officers, and would use all available laws, including quality-of-life statutes, to get gangsters off the streets—much like 1990s New York policing. But

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inadequate supervision resulted in hundreds of indiscriminate stops of young black males, generating ill will that cop-haters nourish to this day.

For sheer devastating destruction of reputation and morale, however, nothing had ever approached the video of three L.A. cops beating the struggling Rodney King in March 1991. Officers speak of the pre-King and post-King eras. After King, a "culture of cowardice," as one sergeant puts it, descended on the top brass, and criminals showed open contempt for a psychologically defeated force.

"The common understanding of the King beating as racially driven brutality is wholly wrong."

The common understanding of the King beating as racially driven brutality is wholly wrong, as Lou Cannon has demonstrated in his magisterial LAPD history, *Official Negligence*. When officers finally stopped the drug-addled King after a 115-mile-an-hour car chase, they tried to take him into custody without hurting him, using commands, a gang-tackle and handcuffs, and a Taser. Only after the powerfully built King charged at them did they resort to their batons. That charge was edited out of the videotape that was shown worldwide for months afterward, leaving 68 seconds of seemingly unprovoked baton blows. Officer Laurence Powell's frenzied counterattack did not grow out of a culture of official racism or violence in the LAPD, but out of his terror, his weakness compared with King (the result of lowered hiring standards), and his ineffectiveness with the baton. Had it been a white driver behaving similarly, his fate would have been the same.

But international public opinion instantaneously deemed the episode pure racial animus. And the influential commission charged with investigating both the event and the LAPD, headed by L.A. establishment lawyer and future U.S. secretary of state Warren Christopher, did little to dispel the widespread public misconception. The commission seized on a handful of radio messages to condemn the department for tolerating bigotry, even though many of those messages had nothing to do with race. The solution to this alleged bias problem, according to the commission: more racial and gender quotas. The commission also charged the department with tolerating excessive force and impeding civilian complaints about police conduct.

A year later, it became stunningly clear how thoroughly the anti-cop publicity machine had emasculated the LAPD, when the department failed completely to quell the riots that raged after the acquittal of the Rodney King officers. As the jury debated the assault charges, signs that violence was in the wings abounded, but, because of fears that riot preparation would provoke the "community," as Mayor Tom Bradley put it, the department did nothing. Once the violence started after the acquittals, management remained paralyzed, and, as rioters pulled drivers from their cars and beat them mercilessly, officers stood by passively. Unwilling to use the necessary force, the commander of the 77th Division, ground zero of the increasingly savage violence, ordered his officers to retreat, knowing full well that unsuspecting white, Asian, and Hispanic motorists, arriving at the intersection of Florence and Normandie, faced certain brutal attack. Trucker Reginald Denny, whose skull Damian Williams gleefully crushed with a brick, was a casualty of this shameful retreat. Even as the death toll mounted, police brass at the ill-equipped riot-command post, fearful of another brutality accusation, told officers not to engage or arrest the rioters.

With the violence spiraling out of control, Chief Daryl Gates went AWOL, attending a tony political fund-raiser miles from the mayhem. When he returned, he still issued no orders. Other commanders, dutifully obeying the political mandate

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for outreach, went to a unity rally at the First African-American Methodist Episcopal Church, as if nothing were happening. The final toll: 54 lost lives, 2,328 hospitalizations, and nearly $1 billion in property damage.

Nothing—not even the King media circus—so destroyed rank-and-file morale as the department's abdication during the riots. Having to stand by as public order crumbled represented a galling betrayal of officers' oath to protect and serve. The message cops took from the episode was that, for their bosses, fear of criticism trumped public safety.

After the smoke cleared and Mayor Bradley forced Chief Gates out of office, the troops yearned for strong leadership to give them their pride back. They didn't get it. The key political consideration in selecting a new chief was that he be black, and Willie Williams, the corpulent and unkempt chief of the lackluster Philadelphia police, got the job. Added to his endemic inability to pass the mandatory police qualifying exam, the revelation that he had accepted gifts from Las Vegas casinos sealed his doom as a one-term chief.

Alas, his successor, LAPD insider Bernard Parks, was worse still. A tall, dashing African American with a square jaw and arrow glance, his tenure is a textbook example of the power of leadership to make or break an organization. Parks took office in 1997 surrounded by high hopes, since he had worked his way up the command ladder and knew virtually everything about the department. But, says Mike Downing, commander of the Hollywood division, he lacked "wisdom"—wisdom to delegate, to learn from subordinates, to change course.

Though Parks's initial moves were promising—above all, he implemented a version of Compstat, the NYPD's computer-assisted crime-analysis program that had driven New York's unparalleled crime drop in the 1990s—he also disastrously implemented the Christopher Commission's demand that the department thoroughly investigate every civilian complaint it

JEFF SHARE/STOCKPHOTO.COM

Anti-cop politics has hamstrung the LAPD.

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received. Hitherto, field supervisors could dispose of patently unfounded complaints after preliminary investigation. Now, a charge that a cop had stolen the *Apollo* lunar lander from the moon would have to be investigated all the way up to the top of the department, with reports from supervisors and commanders at every step. Within a year, complaints processed jumped 400 percent. Every station house had to dedicate three or four supervisors to complaint duty, leaving far fewer to oversee officers. Sergeants were crisscrossing southern California, tracking down witnesses to interview for clearly bogus complaints.

Officers shut down in fury. The no-discretion complaint system penalized good police work, since criminals routinely file complaints as payback for an arrest. Gang detective Jack Cota says: "Gangs knew that the easiest way to keep officers off the streets was to complain." The result: officers avoided law-enforcement actions with a high likelihood of retaliatory complaints.

Perhaps Parks, despite his martinet inclinations, would have made the complaint process more rational over time, but once the Rampart scandal broke, any chance that supervisors would be given more leeway evaporated. The Rampart area, a 7.4-square-mile district of small, closely clustered bungalows and bodegas just west of downtown skyscrapers, is mecca for about 30 Central American gangs, with some 8,000 members. Frequent contact with the gangs' violent indifference to human life develops in officers a politically incorrect loathing of gang culture, which most cops learn to live with, however uneasily. But a very few start fudging the law to ensure punishment for such depravity. The Rampart scandal grew in part out of this vigilante impulse, but the participants' own evil soon overwhelmed any pretensions they may have had as defenders of the good.

Ringleader Rafael Perez and his cronies in the Rampart division of CRASH—the LAPD's undercover gang unit—planted evidence on gangbangers to get them off the streets. They beat them up to get them to talk or to keep them from filing complaints. They also sold stolen drugs and shot people, usually gangsters.

The crimes of Perez and his colleagues would never have gone so far without a total breakdown in oversight. "Once an officer puts on dirtbag clothes, you need good supervisors," says retired commander George Beck, and supervision is precisely what Rampart CRASH lacked. The division's two feuding top commanders were not talking to each other. At all hours, Perez and his partners had unmonitored access to their remote office, where they could beat up gangsters and uncooperative witnesses. They became a rogue gang within the LAPD.

Rampart CRASH's corruption didn't make the whole LAPD corrupt, but the media storm after the scandal broke in 1998 took just that line—one more body blow to the rank and file. "We felt helpless; we wanted to tear that guy's face apart," remembers Robert Duke, a downtown officer. "Being called a dirty cop—and you put up with *so much* on this job! Everyone had their secret desire to leave."

True to form, the LAPD just rolled over and played dead. It disbanded CRASH citywide, leaving no gang cops on the street. Chief Bratton marvels at this overreaction. "When we had the Dirty 30 in New York," he says, "we didn't dismantle all 75 precincts." When the department reconstituted an anti-gang detail, it made sure it was neutered, according to Bratton: "No plainclothes, no unmarked cars, no informants, no narcotics enforcement—it's like asking a carpenter to build a house without nails or a hammer." Cops across L.A. got the message: We don't trust you.

And now the LAPD's troubles really began. The U.S. Justice Department moved to put the department under federal control, invoking an ill-conceived 1994 law allowing Justice to sue local police forces for engaging in a "pattern or practice" of denying individuals their constitutional rights. The threat of terrifyingly costly federal litigation almost always leads local governments to give up local control and

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accept a federally appointed police monitor without a fight.

The Rampart scandal, however egregious, had revealed no pattern or practice in the LAPD of encouraging or tolerating such behavior—especially not after all the post–Rodney King discipline, diversity, and community-outreach measures. But the Clinton Justice Department's campaign against the LAPD was all about power, not reform—as witness DOJ's non-negotiable insistence that the department begin racial data collection to show if cops were "racially profiling," a Clinton Justice buzzword. The Rampart scandal, however, had nothing to do with alleged racial profiling, and Rodney King, even if the episode were a relevant marker of LAPD practices seven years and two chiefs afterward, was stopped for his speeding, not his race.

"'Being called a dirty cop—and you put up with *so much* on this job! Everyone had their secret desire to leave.'"

Chief Bernard Parks's greatest moment was fighting the Justice Department, something no other top cop has done as publicly. The LAPD, he said, was correcting the Rampart scandal. A consent decree's busywork would only drain resources away from his effort to tighten management controls. What do federal civil rights lawyers know about running a police department, anyway? he asked. They couldn't even keep track of ten boxes of sensitive records they had demanded from the LAPD—and lost. Moreover, not only did his cops base their enforcement actions on suspicious behavior, not race, he said, but DOJ had no valid methodology for analyzing the racial data it wanted him to collect.

The chief's resistance earned him the contempt of the *Los Angeles Times* and the city's political elites. City attorney James Hahn—now the mayor—the City Council, and the Police Commission finally forced Parks to accept a five-year consent decree in 2000—without ever making Justice defend its baseless charge of a "pattern or practice" of civil rights violations at the LAPD.

Since the settlement, it gets clearer day by day how right Parks was. After eight years of decline, possibly due to changes in the city's demography, serious felonies rose for the first time in 2000, by 6.7 percent, and they went up alarmingly for the next two years. But the decree has hamstrung the department's ability to respond, by draining money and manpower away from crime busting—some $40 million the first year, and upward of $50 million every year thereafter, according to city estimates, in addition to 350 officers pulled from crime fighting to decree-tending so far. Meanwhile, current chief Bratton has been vainly begging the City Council for 320 new officers.

Justice attorneys, the consent decree makes clear, view policing not primarily as crime fighting but as report writing, with reports written upon reports upon reports. Some of those reports, such as audits of the accuracy of arrest data, represent good management practices. But the decree unwisely locks the department into a draconian and wholly inflexible schedule for completing them. Failure to reach full compliance with all 190 provisions by 2004 means that the decree can continue indefinitely beyond its scheduled expiration in 2006.

Full compliance may well be impossible, judging from the August report of the federal monitor, Michael Cherkasky, who heads the Kroll Associates security firm. A control freak with the most unforgiving interpretation of deadlines, Cherkasky seems unaware that the department sometimes has to tear itself away from report-generation to fight crime. For example, though captains managed to complete required reports on instances of non-deadly force, such as twisting someone's arm to cuff him, within the mandated 14 days 94.3 percent of the time, Cherkasky judged the department out of compliance—a remorseless standard of bureaucratic fidelity that few modern organizations could meet.

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More troublingly, the consent decree rests on a highly dubious managerial philosophy. It presumes that brutality and racism are so ingrained that only oversight systems with zero managerial discretion can stem constant civil rights abuses.

Its rules for investigating deadly force, for instance, presume collusion in lawlessness right up the chain of command. This July, three cops happened to witness a gang shooting in a supermarket parking lot. They jumped out of their car, drew their weapons, and shouted, "Drop your guns." One gangster wheeled and shot; two cops shot back. Everybody missed.

For the rest of the night, each officer was guarded in a separate area of the parking lot, so the three couldn't talk to one another, while investigators canvassed the scene. Three sergeants taken off patrol duty for the rest of the night accompanied their every bathroom visit. At dawn, a separate car transported each officer to the station house. Deputy Chief Earl Paysinger, a rising departmental star, judges: "If you can't trust an unbiased supervisor to put two cops in his car and tell them not to talk to each other, we need to find other supervisors." Such obsessional regulation, he says, "compromises the fabric of that very elusive thing we call trust."

The department's mandated investigations of officer-involved shootings also suggest a perverse set of priorities. That night, twice as many detectives investigated the officers' self-defense shootings for possible civil rights or criminal violations as investigated the gangsters' attempted murder of the officers.

Reports will cascade forth, as is *de rigueur*. Say a cop struggles with a robbery suspect while arresting him, for instance. Even if the suspect admits he wasn't injured, the officer's sergeant still has to write a use-of-force report, interviewing the officer, the suspect, and all potential witnesses, and taking photos. "A two-page arrest report generates a 20-page use-of-force report," a frustrated sergeant grouses. "It may take you four to five hours to document. Then you get an investigation supervisor to study your report; it takes him four hours. Someone else reviews it. By the time everyone's finished, that's a $2,000 report." The racial data-report mandate has a similar effect. "You wouldn't believe what it does to slow my progress down," says a downtown officer, working on a tall stack of them after a night patrolling Skid Row.

By the time Bratton arrived on the job last November, the LAPD was a shadow of its former self. "We were going through the motions, as if running in mud," says Deputy Chief Paysinger. "We weren't doing police work," sums up a downtown cop.

What's more, the ugly battle to oust Chief Parks in 2002 had left a bitter racial aftertaste. While the city's left wing, including new mayor James Hahn, criticized the chief for not making enough progress on the consent decree and on "racial profiling," the black establishment stoutly defended him, showing that race politics is even stronger than anti-police and even anti–racial profiling politics. After his ouster, Parks promptly got elected to the council from a black district, where he lies in wait to ambush either the new police chief or mayor. Bratton understands the tension. As he told a group of community representatives in June: "Believe me, I had concerns as a white coming in after two black chiefs, and after the controversy of the last removal."

But in choosing Bratton, the Police Commission showed how desperately the city wants to reclaim policing from race politics. The commission—and the mayor—wanted someone who would put modern management techniques into the relentless service of cutting crime. Bratton had jumpstarted New York's historic crime drop—bringing homicides down 44 percent and serious crime down 25 percent in 27 months—by holding managers accountable for measurable results: fewer shootings, homicides, and armed robberies, better quality of life across all neighborhoods.

Bratton is fashioning a powerful blueprint for repeating that success, and from the very start he set out to build support for his vision of policing. "In the first few days I don't think he slept at all," recalls police union president Bob Baker. "He was at every community meeting in the city." His message: the LAPD is getting back into the crime-fighting business, and it's going to win. "For the

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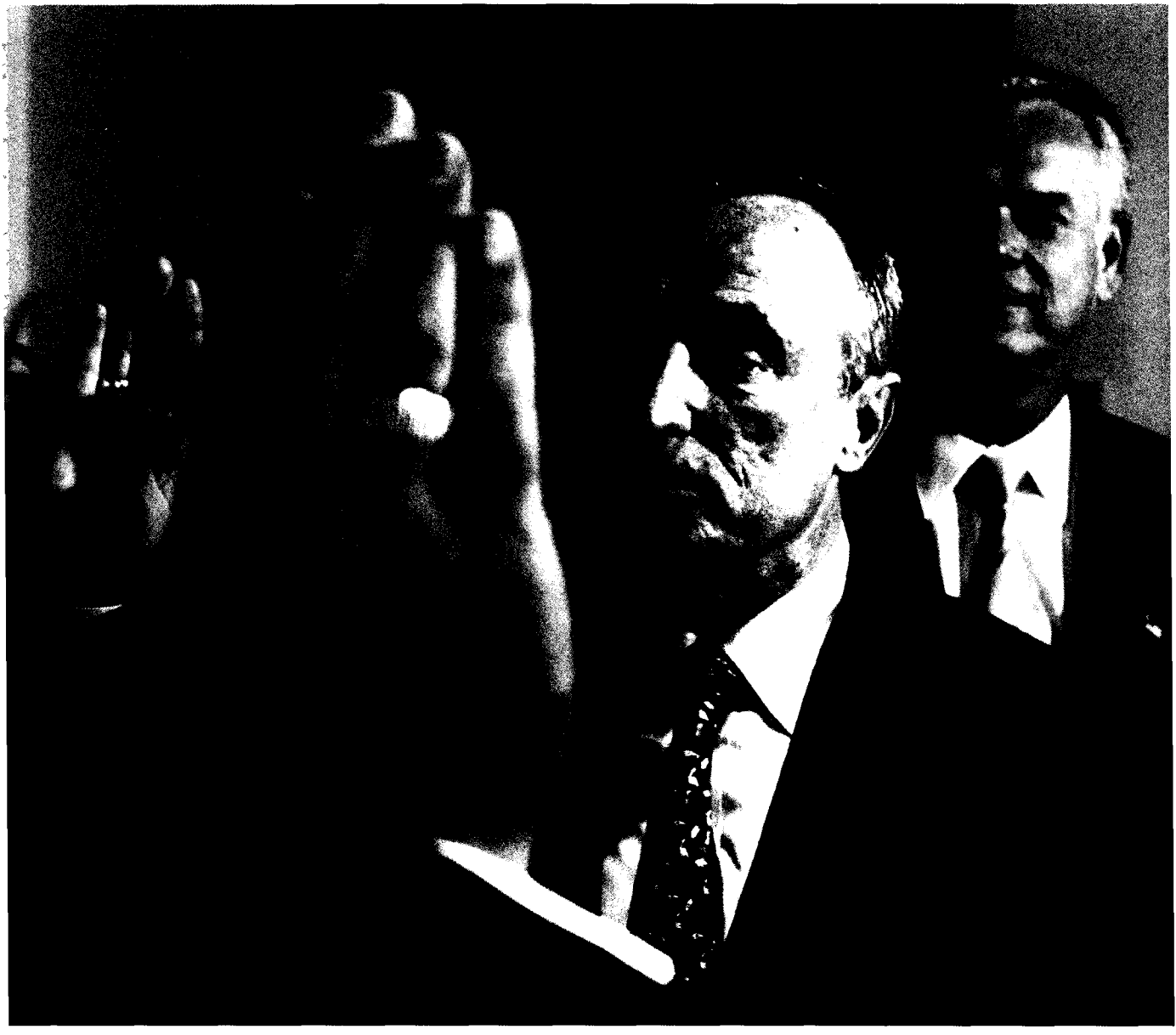

William Bratton is sworn in as L.A.'s police chief on October 28, 2002.

past five years, this department has been on the bench; it hasn't even been on the field," he tells audiences.

He has broken some prevailing taboos to speak the truth. At one community meeting, when activists started complaining about the big, bad LAPD and demanding that Bratton control his cops, Bratton shot back: "Control your kids!" He has stressed that crime-ridden communities cannot expect the police to solve all their problems—that parents and neighbors must take responsibility for stopping gang violence, too. At other

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events, he called criminals "mental nitwits" and gangs "domestic terrorists." He suggested that an appropriate response to a suspect who had fled from the police would be to "hang 'em high."

Such rhetoric was a shot of adrenaline to patrol officers, but the black elite, still nursing its wounds from the Parks ouster, blew up. Its members declared themselves deeply troubled by Bratton's language, and the entire left-wing commentariat piled on. Journalist Mike Davis, the Marxist fabulist of L.A. history, complained about Bratton's plans to attack graffiti, and anti-cop attorney Connie Rice penned an uproarious *Los Angeles Times* op-ed that reverentially quoted a member of the murderous Grape Street Crip gang who argued that—in essence—fighting graffiti was no different from drive-by shootings: "How they 'spect us to respect them when they act like us?" whined this sensitive Crip.

CNN/GETTY IMAGES

The Rodney King beating

But then something remarkable happened. In a scathing editorial, the ultimate arbiter of fashionable opinion—the *Los Angeles Times*—broke ranks, mocking the black establishment's "selective war on words." It pointed out that Bratton's critics had failed miserably to quell street violence, and it said Bratton was right to call that violence domestic terrorism. In a hopeful augury for the future, the new chief's lock on the pinnacle of elite opinion has held firm. Not only has the *Times*'s editorial page consistently backed his calls for more cops to fight crime, but Hollywood moguls Steven Spielberg and David Geffen have donated cash to help update the department's technology.

Following his New York playbook, Bratton searched for the talent among the command staff. His promotions of Jim McDonnell and Mike Hillman to assistant and deputy chief thrilled the rank and file, for they are tough crime-fighters whom the Parks regime had shunned—both marks of honor in the eyes of the street cop. Such personnel choices have convinced officers that their new chief will back them up for smart, assertive policing. Equally crucial to restoring morale has been Bratton's decision to return reasonable discretion to the complaint process. "Bratton is tough on discipline," union chief Baker observes. "But the only thing cops want to know is: 'Does he care?'"

Next, Bratton set priorities, with quelling gang violence at the top of the list. To do that, he put drug and gang enforcement under one command, since gangs dominate the L.A. drug trade. Gang czar Hillman has reenergized the gang units and ordered them to respond aggressively to shootings. "Do it right, do it legally, but don't wait three days for approval before acting," he tells them. Once-moribund multi-agency task forces—drawn from, for example, the city attorney, probation officers, and the LAPD—are finally cooperating effectively.

But these policy changes cannot be fully effective unless the beaten-down detective corps recovers its zeal and its mandate for crime-fighting. "In the old days," says LAPD chronicler James Ellroy, "when you had a murder, the detectives would roll on it till they dropped. They'd work through the night." Today, thanks to bureaucratic constraints, detectives spend most of their days filing reports on arrests that patrol officers have already made, not on solving crimes. And thanks to the politics of gender, they spend too much of their remaining time on domestic-violence cases, to meet politically correct state mandates.

Bratton's inner circle is trying to turn them back into detectives. The morning after a prostitute had been killed this August, Deputy Chief Paysinger asked the detective on the case what the

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vice officers had said about her. The vice officers don't get in until 2 PM, the detective replied, so he hadn't spoken to them yet. "They have phones, don't they?" Paysinger responded caustically. "For Christ's sake, someone's dead." The department is also requiring detectives to go to every shooting, even if no one was killed, instead of showing up only at homicides or near-homicides, as before. As Paysinger explains, "If we don't have a greater awareness of the most violent of crimes, as purveyors of the peace we're done."

The LAPD reengineers are hammering home to detectives how valuable search warrants are as a tool for preventing crime before it happens. "Even if you find nothing, as you search, you may see a parolee at large, or someone who wants to be a witness, or other weapons in plain sight," says Paysinger. "You're telling the crook: 'I will always be there watching.'" But until recently, few detectives even remembered how to write a search-warrant request to a judge.

Bratton is using Compstat, the crime analysis and command accountability sessions he pioneered in New York, to reinforce these lessons in proactive policing. A sign in the large Compstat room reads: WHO ARE THEY? WHERE ARE THEY? HAVE THEY BEEN ARRESTED?—the conceptual framework for the weekly Compstat meetings. During those meetings, top brass grill area commanders on their knowledge of crime patterns in their jurisdictions and their plans for solving them. Jim McDonnell, who heads the sessions, reminds commanders about some basic crime-fighting tools imported from New York, such as questioning all suspects about other unsolved crimes. After a gang shooting, he tells them, don't let your officers mill around guarding the perimeter of the scene; get them quickly into the shooter's home turf, in anticipation of a retaliatory drive-by.

Besides Compstat, Bratton's biggest New York policing innovation was to demonstrate the power of order-maintenance enforcement. When he headed the New York Transit Police, his troops began arresting turnstile jumpers and subway panhandlers—until then, viewed as harmless victims of poverty—and caught serious criminals. As NYPD commissioner, he cracked down on public drinkers and graffiti vandals, and by so doing moved once chaotic neighborhoods toward greater civility and safety.

Bratton is showcasing order-maintenance (or "broken-windows") policing in three Los Angeles neighborhoods—downtown's Skid Row, the sadly deteriorated Macarthur Park in Rampart, and Hollywood, with its hookers and hustlers. Skid Row (also known as the "Nickel" for the cheap flophouses that vagrants once used) is the greatest challenge.

"Nothing in New York's most chaotic days in the 1980s comes close to the squalor of the warehouse district."

The most amazing discovery a first-time visitor to the Nickel will make is that its few legitimate residents think it looks *good*—compared with before Bratton arrived. Until you've stood on Fifth and Wall, you haven't really seen a vagrancy problem. Nothing in New York's most chaotic days in the 1980s comes close to the squalor and madness that have taken over block upon block of the warehouse district. Addicted men and women fill entire streetscapes, some sitting in lawn chairs outside their tents, others sprawled out facedown on the sidewalk. Pushers peddle drugs hidden inside cigarette boxes spread out on the sidewalk. Outside the women's missions, teenagers strut threateningly, while their newest illegitimate siblings are parked in baby carriages on the sidewalk. Transvestites in bikinis gesture defiantly at the occasional passing squad car.

A few hardy toy and fish wholesalers remain. Holly Sea Food has sold fish downtown since 1923, but over the last few years, one-third of its neighbors have left. "You can't sell your business or hire help," laments owner Rick Merry, in his air-conditioned wood-laminate office. "We've had an ad in the *Times* for a bookkeeper. Candidates

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will just drive by without stopping. They later call: 'I'm sorry, but I won't work there.' The female postman put in for a transfer. Ladies were leaning up against her truck, defecating. The bad part is: my wife works here. Guys will walk right up to the gutter and whip it out, and there she is, staring at someone's privates."

Four months ago, a vagrant's tent across the street from Holly's warehouse exploded in flames as the occupant slept inside, payback for a bad drug deal. The target would have died had the surrounding bums not pulled him from his tent.

Downtown L.A.'s "homeless" problem may be unparalleled in scale and concentration, but its causes are the same as everywhere else: politics and misguided "compassion." The lawless bum life-style depends on the subsidy of self-proclaimed do-gooders, who provide everything legal that a street person could desire. At 6 AM one day this summer, a tangle of garments and half-eaten plates of food, which volunteers had doled out the night before, strewed an entire sidewalk block. The "homeless" left the city's sanitation service to clean up what they didn't want.

The brightly colored tents that fill the sidewalks were another gift of the homeless advocates—a gift intended to foil law enforcement, on the theory that, if the vagrants could claim ownership of their street domicile, rather than scrounging it from dumpsters every night, the police would not be able to remove encampments from the streets. The success of this strategy waxes and wanes with the politics of the moment.

Even before Bratton arrived, the former commander of downtown's Central Division, Charles Beck, had tried to stem the anarchy. "I was abhorred by it," he says. "It drove me nuts. My dream was to clean up downtown L.A. You need the collective will to say that this conduct is not allowed any longer."

But Beck made little progress: advocates had the City Council under their thumb. The shrillest activist, Alice Callahan, could call the council and say: "Do you know that an officer just told a homeless person to wake up?" and the police would get an incensed phone call in ten minutes, recalls officer Daniel Gomez. Business owners, by contrast, could tell the council: "We have a serious problem," and the response would be, "Yeah, *whatever*."

Now, though, some newly elected council members recognize the truth: conditions on the Nickel are unacceptable in a civilized society. Their election to the council could not be more timely. Chief Bratton needs all the political backing he can get to battle the advocates.

Every Bratton initiative to civilize Skid Row has sparked a lawsuit. The radical National Lawyers Guild sued to prevent arrests of parole and probation violators, while the ACLU asserts that enforcing a law against blocking sidewalks constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment." Undeterred, the LAPD continues to target drug dealing, violence, and other illegal behavior, without exempting people who choose to live on the streets. A team of officers patrols Skid Row every morning, referring people to housing and services, yes—but also making arrests for lawless conduct.

Bratton's attack on street disorder has dramatically improved public space downtown, according to local businesses. "Eight months ago, there were 50 tents across the street," says fish merchant Rick Merry. "You couldn't walk on the sidewalk." To a newcomer, the sidewalks still look perilous, but the regulars see tremendous progress. Patrol cops agree. "These guys [the homeless task force] have done an incredible job," says officer Robert Duke. "If they stopped for two days, it would be out of control; patrol can't handle it."

Developers are taking note as well. They are converting abandoned Beaux Arts office buildings and factories into hotly sought-after lofts, moving ever closer to the heart of the Nickel. If Bratton can continue to fend off the advocates and their judicial handmaidens, L.A.'s architecturally rich downtown may eventually throb with round-the-clock living for the law-abiding.

What Bratton needs most for all these initiatives to succeed is more manpower. In New

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York, as he and his deputies rolled out one new strategy after another, the department had ample staffing to implement them, and crime plunged immediately—16 percent after six weeks. In Los Angeles, by contrast, Bratton has had to backtrack. He had to dismantle an anti-graffiti squad, because he needed more patrol officers. He has scaled back his crime-reduction schedule from an originally promised 10 percent reduction in crime and a 25 percent cut in homicides in 2003 to a 5 percent drop in crime and a 20 percent cut in homicides. These goals are still exceedingly impressive, and he is already close to meeting them. As of September 13, homicides were down 23 percent compared with the year before, and all felonies were down 3.9 percent. But in his first year in New York, felonies dropped 12 percent.

"Bratton's attack on street disorder has dramatically improved public space downtown, say local businesses."

When the City Council refused Bratton's plea for 320 new officers this spring, the chief lashed out, citing the urgency of fighting gangs and defending against terrorism. Putting police hiring on hold, he said, is like "placing a telephone call to Osama and saying, 'Osama, hold off for nine months till we get our act together here.'" The Council declared itself shocked by his tone. The *Los Angeles Times* told the legislators to get over it. When Bratton tried to free up existing cops by allowing them to ignore residential burglar alarms unless verified by the owner or alarm company, since over 90 percent of alarm calls are false, the council balked again, and the compromise that the mayor engineered—allowing homeowners two false alarms—will just engender more paperwork without unburdening patrol.

It is critical to L.A.'s future that Bratton succeed. Effective policing is our most powerful urban reclamation tool: when cops make inner cities safe, commerce and homeownership revive, as happened in Central Harlem following its 80 percent drop in homicides and burglaries in the 1990s. Crime reduction also improves race relations. Bratton himself argued to a community meeting this June that as long as the black and Hispanic crime rate remains so high, whites and Asians—as well as some police officers—will continue to fear suspicious-looking blacks and Hispanics.

To get at least some of the manpower he needs, Bratton has a source at his fingertips: the 300-plus officers engaged full time in consent-decree duty. In addition, he could profitably redirect the thousands of hours that all other officers and commanders spend on consent-decree mandates, which undoubtedly add up to hundreds of full-time positions.

One of the best urban-policy moves that the Bush administration could make, since energetic policing is not a local issue but a national one, would be to free the LAPD from the consent decree. By doing so, the administration would also be boosting homeland security: alert cops are the country's second most important defense against another terror attack, after robust intelligence. That defense is useless, however, without enough cops to go around.

The consent decree is based on outdated stereotypes about the LAPD. If Attorney General John Ashcroft thinks that, without federal control, the LAPD would abuse people's rights, he should send his Justice Department lawyers to talk to people like the Reverend Leonard Jackson of the First African-American Methodist Episcopal Church. Asked if the police treat innocent black men abusively, Jackson responds emphatically: "No, no, no. They don't still work like that. It's been drummed into the heads of officers that everybody has rights."

Urban policing could be raised to a new height of professionalism by taking the shackles off the LAPD and letting Bratton turn the department into a national model of twenty-first-century policing, as it once was for the twentieth century. ■

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Who Runs New York?

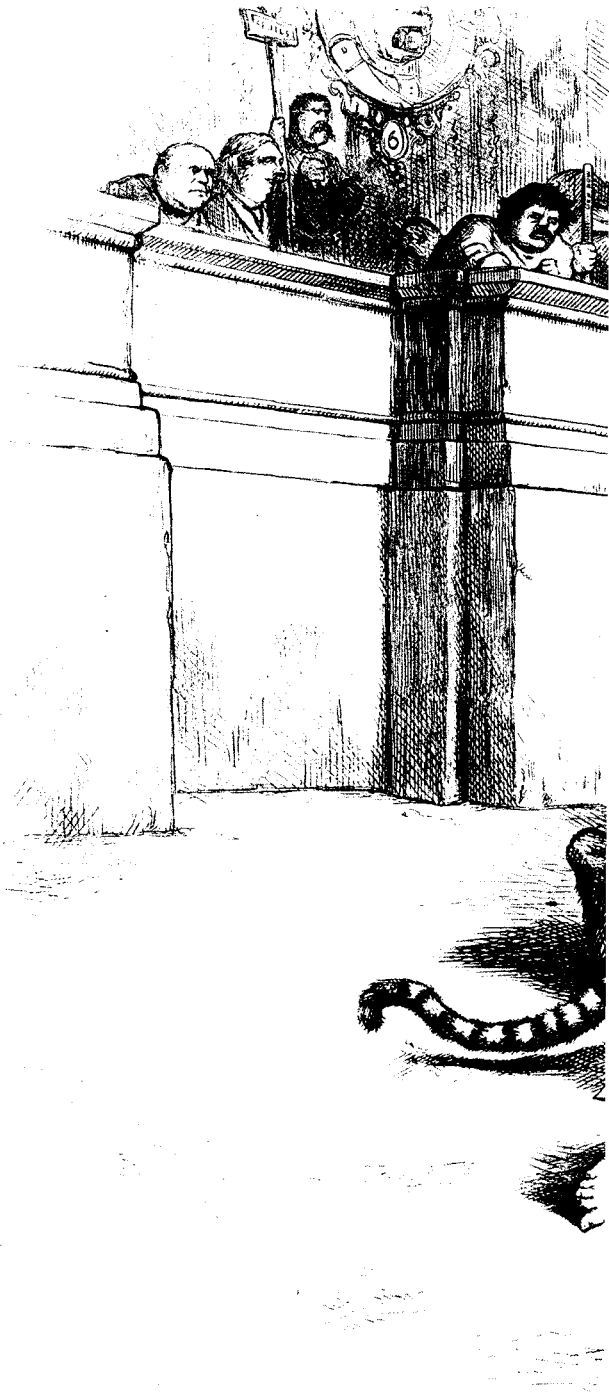
No, Mayor Mike, it's not political bosses. It's unions and nonprofits.

Steven Malanga

Mayor Michael Bloomberg's campaign to replace New York's party primary elections with nonpartisan primaries, whose top two winners will then face off in the general election, is (as you may already have concluded) trivial, but it has one important, if unintended, by-product. The measure, which will appear on Gotham's ballot in November, casts an especially brilliant spotlight on how seismically New York's effective political system has changed from the days when party bosses and political clubhouses ran city hall. As a result, the proposal makes crystal clear just what ails Gotham's politics and what kind of reform New York voters really need.

Bloomberg is touting nonpartisan elections—a nostrum first advanced by the Progressive reformers at the beginning of the twentieth century—as a way to weaken the party bosses in New York and thus open up public office to energetic and capable candidates, much like himself, who are not creatures of a party. But the mayor is trying to solve the problems of 50 years ago. Stuck in a time warp, he seems to think that we are still living in the days when Tammany bigwigs like Carmine DeSapio or Boss Tweed chose candidates based on party loyalty, without regard to merit or local support.

In fact, New York City's political system has been utterly transformed since those days. Now, instead of party bosses running city hall, it is powerful public-employee unions and community nonprofit groups living off government money that control the city's political process and



THE GRANGER COLLECTION

In the old days, corrupt Tammany bosses preyed on Gotham's body politic, . . .

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ANNY TIGER LOOSE.—"What are you going to do about it?"

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political agenda. Yes, these groups are aligned with the Democratic Party, but they are not subservient to the party; the party is their instrument, a tool of their convenience. Nonpartisan voting will do nothing to wrest control from these groups but may instead help them solidify their political dominance at the expense of the city's taxpayers and businesses. By weakening political parties still further, Mayor Bloomberg and the supporters of nonpartisan elections may inadvertently destroy the only potential vehicle for true reform in a New York City whose politics are increasingly under the thumb of public servants.

The movement that reshaped New York politics—eroding the power of party bosses and paving the way for greater influence of public-sector factions—began in the mid-1950s, when an alliance of middle-class Jewish Democrats and the WASP elite, led by the likes of Herbert Lehman and Eleanor Roosevelt, worked to unseat the Irish and Italian conservative Democrats who ran Tammany Hall. These chieftains had long wielded power through a network of neighborhood political clubs that served as the eyes and ears of the party and that provided useful services to constituents, from getting a traffic light fixed, to lobbying for a new neighborhood school, to bringing complaints of local businesses to the attention of city hall. In return, the club expected constituents' loyalty on Election Day. The clubs also were the conduit through which the party machines dispensed patronage, with each club generally granted rights to several dozen city jobs at any one time, which the head of the club gave out as rewards to successful district leaders and their relatives.

When the reformers ousted the last Tammany boss, Carmine DeSapio, in 1961 and systematically attacked the machines in other boroughs, the neighborhood political clubs began disappearing, leaving a void in many communities, which the reformers showed little interest in filling. "Liberals are not neighborhood people," wrote Daniel Patrick Moynihan about the transformation of the Democratic Party in the city after Tammany's demise.

Into the vacuum stepped several new-style groups that rapidly accumulated political power but had a very different agenda from the neighborhood clubs, an agenda that focused on bigger government, more spending, and ultimately higher taxes. One new power appeared in the form of unions representing public-sector employees, who won the right to organize in New York City in 1954 and to bargain collectively with the city in 1958. Almost immediately, the unions began throwing their weight around, demanding higher wages and better benefits and work rules, and within a decade they had staged a series of debilitating strikes against Gotham to achieve these goals.

Government-employee union leaders quickly saw that political power was essential to their success: elections were a way for them to pick their members' bosses and to influence who would sit across the bargaining table from them. They began mobilizing heavily in support of candidates who pledged to protect their interests; and soon that era's union leaders—men like Victor Gotbaum of District Council 37 and Albert Shanker of the teachers' union—became political heavyweights and kingmakers. So successful were these groups that by the mid-1960s, political scientist Theodore Lowi observed that the public-employee bureaucracy in New York was emerging as "the new machine."

This modern Tammany Hall introduced a new kind of patronage that proved far more destructive to the city than the type fostered by the original party machines. Even in Tammany's heyday, patronage only accounted for a few thousand municipal jobs. But with the rise of public unions—whose entire *raison d'être* was to boost their own membership, to protect workers' interests, and to thwart efforts at downsizing government or making it more efficient through privatization and other means—the city's workforce numbers bolted upward and continued on that arc with only brief interruptions over 40 years, so that today New York's government employs about 100,000 more workers than it did in the mid-1960s, a 30 percent increase, while its population has remained essentially unchanged.

. . . and political reform focused on breaking the machine's power.

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THE TAMMANY TIGER STRUNG UP.—[From a Sketch by Charles J. Fagan.]

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Not long after public-sector unions became a force, another new political power arose in neighborhoods: government-funded, community-based social-services organizations. Spurred by Mayor John Lindsay's efforts to decentralize government, and lavishly funded with government dollars by President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, activists formed organizations that built subsidized housing, ran day-care centers, operated health clinics. From practically nothing in the early 1960s, by 1967 there were more than 400 federal grant programs providing $15 billion to these local groups around the country, with a heavy concentration in New York because of the influence of Mayor Lindsay, whom Washington policymakers touted as one of urban America's new leaders. Spurred by this government largesse, social-services organizations grew in New York City from a few hundred, employing fewer than 50,000 people in the mid-1960s, to more than 4,000 today, employing 185,000 people.

Over time, these groups have become a new kind of neighborhood political clubhouse, running and successfully electing their own members to political office. Activists like Ramon Velez, who ran a network of social-services agencies out of his base in Hunts Point in the Bronx, or Pedro Espada Jr., who built a single health clinic in the Soundview section of the South Bronx into a sweeping public-services empire, used the influence they gained in neighborhoods as a launching pad for political careers. And rather than focusing on ensuring that the neighborhood got clean streets, adequate policing, and good schools, the new clubhouses advanced a social-welfare agenda more concerned with bringing the latest government-funded halfway house, drug-treatment center, or job-training program to a neighborhood—to be run by Velezes, Espadas, and their counterparts, and staffed by loyal supporters—whether the community needed the service or not.

Today these community activists and government careerists dominate the politics of New York City in a way that borough bosses and the neighborhood political clubs of Tammany once did, making New York's public servants in effect the city's political masters. Working both within the Democratic Party and outside it, they have created a coalition of public-sector interests—of tax eaters—that has arrayed itself against the interests of taxpaying individuals and businesses in the city. Irrespective of the public interest, their interest is always *more*: more city workers with more pay, more social services, more pensions, more benefits—and more job-killing taxes.

You can see the extent of their dominance in the way these forces took advantage of the city's most recent election-law change, which instituted term limits. Although term limits were intended to open up the political process to outsiders (just as Mayor Bloomberg expects nonpartisan elections to do), when the law went into effect in 2001 public-sector insiders and activists swarmed into the Democratic primary races. A perfect case in point is a City Council race in a solidly middle-class black section of southeast Queens. The seven candidates who ran for the Democratic Party nomination included two members of the United Federation of Teachers (one of whom was a union delegate), two professors at (unionized) city-run colleges, a former New York City high school principal, an assistant commissioner of the city's Parks Department, an executive at a publicly funded substance-abuse clinic (who was the local Democratic organization's candidate), and an administrator of a publicly funded welfare-services organization, who ultimately prevailed against the party organization's candidate.

The lineup was much the same throughout the city, so that more than six in ten of the newly elected city councillors had backgrounds in government or in publicly funded social services. Moreover, in several crucial districts these new councilmen had trounced opponents backed by the Democratic Party organization—belying the Bloomberg notion that a cabal of bosses runs the city.

Increasingly these days, public-sector candidates, nominally Democrats, are simply using the party as a flag of convenience. Nothing illustrates more clearly how the Democratic Party has become the tail on the public-sector dog than a recent Democratic primary in the Bronx, pitting two social-services powerhouses against each

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other. The battle took place in Soundview, ruled for years by Pedro Espada Jr., one of the earliest of the social-services kingpins. Espada's publicly funded empire of health-care clinics and programs for welfare mothers and senior citizens, serving about 100,000 residents a year, made him one of the most recognized figures in the community and helped both him and his son get elected to various public offices, at first with the support of the Democratic Party, but later as rebels, powerful and independent enough to thumb their noses at the party.

After several unsuccessful efforts by the Bronx Democratic Party to oust the renegade Espadas, the family recently suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of another power within the social-services community, the 1199/SEIU health-care workers' union. Sensing an opportunity to defeat Espada's son in a City Council race, because more than 4,000 members of 1199 live in the district, one of the union's organizers, Annabel Palma, enlisted the support of her bosses and other union activists for her candidacy, and then leveraged that into an endorsement from the Democratic Party. The move left young Espada complaining, understandably if inaccurately, that the party was "hiring" a union to defeat him. Union members helped pour more than $90,000 in contributions into their candidate's war chest, a hefty sum for a first-time City Council candidate, and hundreds of health-care workers fanned out across the district to support her bid. "[She] has a million foot soldiers out there with 1199," Bronx state assembly member Rubén Díaz marveled. The result was a smashing victory for the union-backed candidate in an election in which the official Democratic Party's support was largely inconsequential and almost an afterthought.

"A coalition of public-sector interests has arrayed itself against the interests of taxpayers in the city."

The Democratic Party, as these recent elections make clear, is hardly the all-powerful force that the mayor and other nonpartisan-election fans believe it is. In fact, if there is a significant overarching force behind the city's public-sector politics today, it is the Working Families Party—which, with fewer than 7,000 registered voters, is not at all a political party in the conventional sense. Rather, it is a union instrument of electoral politics, mobilizing the membership of its affiliated public-sector unions and union-boosting activist groups like ACORN to support its preferred candidates, as in the Palma-Espada race. Using New York State's unusual election law, which allows minor parties to endorse candidates from other parties, the WFP has been able to work both with the Democratic leadership and at times against it to elect candidates hewing to its agenda of bigger government and higher taxes.

This strategy has worked smoothly. In 2001, for instance, 19 candidates endorsed for various municipal offices by the WFP won their Democratic primary elections—with several of the victories coming at the expense of candidates backed by the Democratic Party's official county organizations—and they then went on to win the general election. In the City Council, where 15 WFP-backed candidates won, those victories gave the WFP the kind of voting bloc that no other minor party has ever had. The WFP has used that new voting power to introduce and pass a host of significant legislation in the new council, some of it over the mayor's veto, including an expansion of the city's living-wage laws and the toughest predatory lending bill in the country. The party's success, smacking of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, has prompted even the *New York Times* to note that the WFP has emerged as "a significant policy-making force," an extraordinary statement about a "party" with a tiny handful of registered members.

More and more Democratic candidates are now recognizing the WFP's power. Up to 30 Democratic City Council incumbents have sought and received the WFP's endorsement for the 2003

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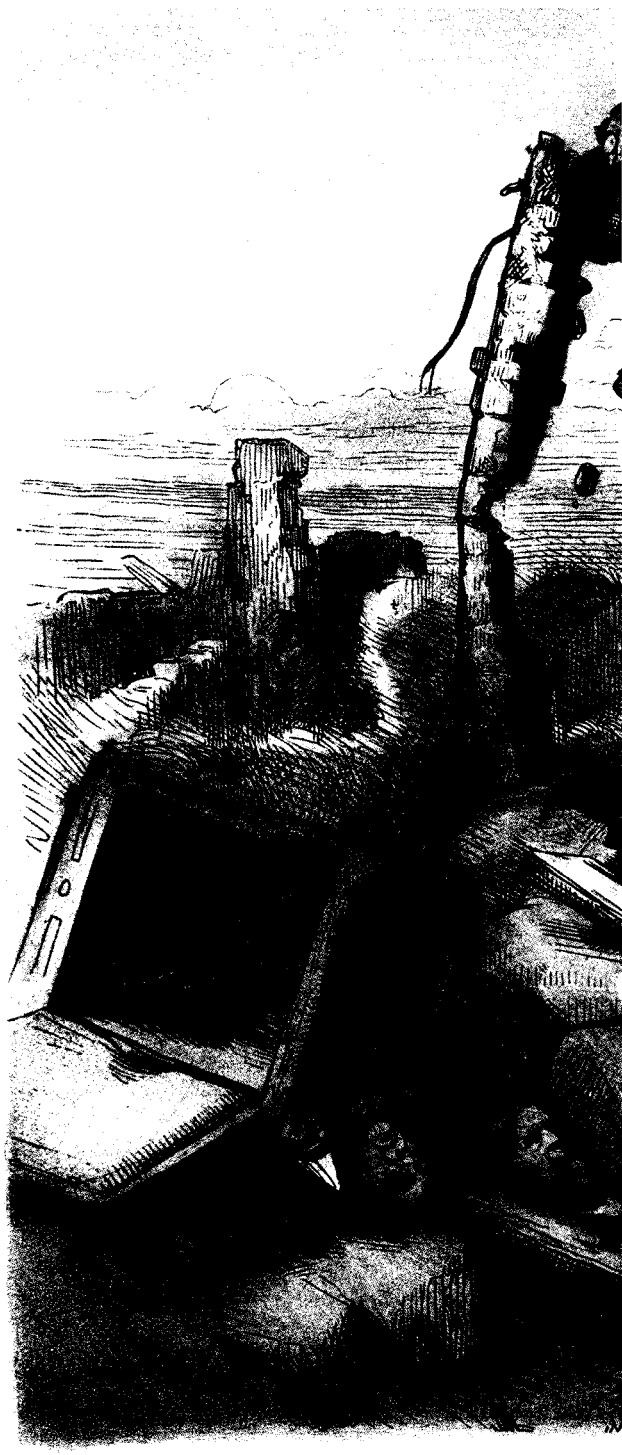
elections. That's certain to give the WFP a majority on the City Council, which, if recent history is any guide, it will use with more purpose and effectiveness than the Democratic Party has used its majority to push legislatively for the tax-eater party agenda of higher taxes—including a stock-transfer tax and a wealth tax on rich New Yorkers—an expansion of the city's union-strengthening living-wage law to cover more workers, and a greater burdening of city businesses with still more regulations and requirements.

Switching to nonpartisan elections would do nothing to mitigate the power of the Working Families Party, which is merely the political face of the public-sector unions. It might actually increase the political influence of the WFP and its pro-union activist allies. That's because any switch to nonpartisan voting, by eliminating party primaries, would further weaken the ability of already weak Democratic county bosses to select candidates and sway elections, just as Mayor Bloomberg intends. When that happens, as the experience of nonpartisan voting in other cities demonstrates, other well-established groups will fill the void.

While in some cities, that group could be a business or civic organization—as in Dallas, where a business group has elected 15 of the last 17 mayors under nonpartisan voting—in Gotham, where business or taxpayer-led civic groups are weak and ineffective, it is the public-sector-oriented organizations that will benefit. "In New York City, groups like unions, politically active churches, and community organizations would dominate in a nonpartisan environment," says Ted Arrington, professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and a longtime observer of nonpartisan voting. These groups, after all, have all the necessary infrastructure of a political party: a strong organization, a host of workers to campaign and get out the vote, and the ability to raise money—as well as a powerful motive of self-interest. For these reasons, the WFP's chief, Daniel Cantor,



THE GRANGER COLLECTION

But with the machine in ruins, a new set of special interests preys on the taxpayers.

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SOMETHING THAT DID BLOW OVER—NOVEMBER 7, 1871.

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isn't worried about the impact of nonpartisan elections on his organization. "We'd still have our grassroots support to use," he remarks.

The city's Democratic Party officials, by contrast, are understandably apoplectic over the prospect that nonpartisan voting could remove their last vestiges of power, which is why they have led a vicious attack on the mayor's plan by playing the race card. Nonpartisan voting, they claim, would hurt minority candidates, because minorities have prospered within the Democratic Party, and any system that weakens the party's influence thwarts their political opportunities. But this cry is a cynical bid by the party leadership to hold on to what little power it has in the rapidly changing political landscape. A close look at the history and experience of nonpartisan voting in other cities shows no evidence whatever that any racial or ethnic group gains or loses under nonpartisan voting.

The real losers in nonpartisan elections won't be minority candidates, but those few candidates who try to represent taxpayers instead of tax eaters. By eliminating party primaries, nonpartisan elections will only further reduce the already dim prospects of Republican or Conservative Party candidates, whose voices, so muted in the city, will get drowned out in primary elections in which hordes of public-sector candidates will be running simultaneously. Today, a Republican is assured of a place on the general election ballot, come what may; and in the last three mayoral elections, those Republicans have been avowed champions of the taxpayers (though Michael Bloomberg later reneged on his no-new-taxes stance). In the proposed new system, a taxpayers' candidate will almost never make it to the final balloting. In fact, the charter-revision commission's own detailed analysis essentially concludes that, under nonpartisan voting, the 2001 general election would have been almost entirely free of GOP candidates—including candidate Bloomberg.

What New York politics needs most is a viable two-party system that offers taxpayers and private-sector employers candidates who will represent their interests against the overwhelming political clout of the public-sector special interests. Such voters made themselves heard in the city's last three mayoral elections, when candidates running on the Republican line assembled a classic coalition of outer-borough, ethnic, middle-class voters—the kind who used to be the soul of Gotham's Democratic Party before it veered sharply left—and used it to defeat candidates heavily backed by public-sector unions and community activist groups. But no one, neither Giuliani nor Bloomberg nor the state GOP's leadership, has made any effort to assemble that coalition permanently. In numerous districts throughout the city where both Giuliani and Bloomberg won handily, candidates representing the tax-eaters' agenda have triumphed in City Council or State Legislature races because they ran without taxpayer-interest opposition.

Although the odds against creating such an effective organization to represent taxpaying interests seem steep, the numbers give hope. In the last mayoral election, for example, 48 percent of Hispanics voted for GOP candidate Bloomberg, up from the hefty 43 percent they gave GOP candidate Giuliani four years earlier. In a recent *New York Times* poll, black and Hispanic voters were even less favorably disposed toward higher taxes, and more inclined to demand that public-sector workers do more to help solve the city's budget crisis, than white voters—an indication that the city's growing minority middle class is ripe for something other than the public-sector-oriented candidates now dominating the landscape, and evidence that the Democratic bosses' expectation of automatic minority allegiance also belongs to a bygone political reality.

A revived GOP, tenaciously advocating in every city race the proven Giuliani urban agenda—fiscal restraint, effective policing, and school choice—could begin to present an alternative to the public-sector domination of the city. But nonpartisan voting, promoted by a mayor who seems to have little clue about the true nature of the city's contemporary political culture or even the forces that elected him, would bury any prospects, however slim today, for such crucial reform. ■

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Tragedy Looms for Gotham's School Reform

A fatal flaw may derail the mayor's Herculean effort.

Sol Stern

Though New York's billionaire mayor Mike Bloomberg and his handpicked schools' chancellor Joel Klein sure don't look like revolutionaries, they have turned upside-down a school system that resisted change for half a century. Over the past 18 months, with no less courage than managerial skill they have dismantled the dysfunctional old bureaucracy, put the teachers' and principals' unions on the defensive, and created a streamlined administrative apparatus to funnel a bigger slice of the system's $12.5 billion annual budget into the classroom. Yet tragically, they have gotten one critical part of the formula for improving academic performance completely wrong. On the educational side, their magnificent sleek engine for reform is tearing off in the wrong direction, threatening to plunge the academic futures of 1.1 million children over a cliff.

Mayor Bloomberg began his remaking of the old order as soon as the State Legislature voted through mayoral control of Gotham's schools in May 2002. First, he cleaned out the stables at the Board of Education headquarters at 110 Livingston Street, breaking up the patronage and special-interest nests within the central administrative apparatus and selling the empty building. A few months later, he took a wrecking ball to the system's other pillars of patronage and corruption—the 32 community school boards.

Together with Klein, a tough New York lawyer and formerly head of the Clinton Justice Department's antitrust division, Bloomberg created a revamped command-and-control center, placing the several hundred administrators who survived the 110 Livingston Street purge in the Tweed Courthouse, 200 feet from City Hall, where the mayor could keep an eye on them. Bloomberg instructed the troops to focus like a "laser beam" on a single goal—improving teaching and learning in the classroom. To further that goal, Chancellor Klein began a highly publicized search for the "best practices" in classroom teaching and curriculum, an initiative he named "Children First."

One telling sign of how radical were the changes Bloomberg and Klein wrought was the complaint by United Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten that she was the last person to find out what was going on inside the Tweed headquarters. Her union once had the run of 110 Livingston Street, where a UFT vice president was permanently stationed, with instant

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access to the top administrators in every important bureau. Indeed, there was a time when chancellors and other high-level administrators owed their appointments to the union's influence. At Tweed, union officials now wait in line to see the chancellor, with everyone else.

Thus, as the city's schoolchildren returned to their classrooms this September, Mayor Bloomberg pronounced himself pleased with his creation. "At every level, we have replaced an old school system where responsibility was diffused and confused," he said at a press conference. "There is [now] a direct link from the teacher's desk in the classroom right to the mayor's desk."

What the mayor didn't say was that this link carries messages in only one direction, micromanaging teachers and principals to an extent unprecedented in American K-12 education. Agents of the chancellor (euphemistically called "coaches") operate in almost all of the city's 1,200 schools to make sure that every educator marches in lockstep with the Department of Education's approved pedagogical approaches. There is now only one way, the Tweed way, to teach the three Rs in the schools.

Trouble is, many of the programs and methods now being crammed down the teachers' throats have no record of success and are particularly ill-suited for disadvantaged minority children. In fact, a cabal of progressive educators chose them for ideological reasons, in total disregard of what the scientific evidence says about the most effective teaching methods—particularly in the critically important area of early reading.

Young children who fall substantially behind their peers in reading rarely catch up and almost always remain at risk of academic failure across the board. Thus New York's reading scores—showing that more than half of all students, and over 70 percent of minority students, can't read at basic proficiency levels—are very grim news.

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For over 100 years, Gotham's public schools succeeded famously, . . .

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Fortunately, as serious educators know, recent advances in the scientific understanding of how children learn to read—based not on wishful thinking, but rather on a remarkable convergence of evidence in experimental psychology, linguistics, and medical research—make it possible to design truly effective instructional programs to raise reading levels in the early grades.

Two separate government-sponsored reports clearly lay out what the scientific evidence says about teaching young children to read. The first, published in 1998 by the National Academy of Sciences, concluded that systematic phonics instruction was the most effective approach. Two years later, the National Reading Panel's even more comprehensive report also concluded that "systematic phonics instruction is significantly more effective than instruction that teaches little or no phonics."

Last year, the American Psychological Association got into the act, too, issuing a report whose conclusions *Scientific American* summarized: "Our recent review of the topic shows that there is no doubt about it: teaching that makes the rules of phonics clear will ultimately be more successful than teaching that does not. Admittedly, some children can infer these principles on their own, but most need explicit instruction in phonics, or their reading skills will suffer." In addition, in several appearances before congressional committees, Dr. Reid Lyon, chief of the National Institutes of Health's Child Development and Behavior Branch, said the results of his agency's studies argue for the use of explicit phonics programs in the early grades.

Partly because of this accumulating evidence, Congress voted twice, by overwhelming bipartisan majorities, that federal reading funds must go only to school districts that use instructional approaches based on scientifically validated research. Explicit language to that effect first appeared in the Reading Excellence Act of 1998 during the Clinton administration and then again in the "Reading First" section of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

New York City is eligible for almost $40 million a year in federal reading funds for six years, as long it meets the standard of "scientifically based research." It should be a no-brainer for Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein to gain an extra $240 million for their schools for something they should be doing even if no federal funds were attached. Or so you might think. For why would an education administration proud of having freed itself from special-interest influence use any reading program that *didn't* meet the standards for effectiveness agreed upon by such a wide consensus of scientists?

The answer is that in education there are not only special interests but deeply entrenched ideological and therefore political interests. Progressive educators (of whom New York has more than its share) shudder at the thought that science confers validity on the practice of teaching young children to read through scripted lessons in letter/sound correspondence—that is, phonics. Progressive education ideology rests on the Romantic belief that children learn naturally (including learning to read) and that the role of the teacher is to facilitate this natural process through hands-on, or "constructivist," activity in "child-centered" classrooms. Thus, for example, a third-grade math teacher might have the children construct a Japanese garden as a way of learning addition and subtraction as they measure. Almost as a religious belief, progressives emphasize the importance of the classroom environment: arranging chairs in groups, putting rugs on the floors for children to sprawl, providing "workshop" areas where six-year-olds have writing conferences, and having teachers stand off to the side rather than in the front of the class.

Phonics, on the other hand, conjures up everything progressives hate about traditional classrooms—that they are artificial places, where deadening lessons are taught by "drill and kill" methods that destroy children's natural spontaneity and innate creativity, turning them into the regimented conformists that a repressive industrial society needs to man its assembly lines and corporate offices. If this is what science nevertheless says works, then science must be wrong—or at least it must be the wrong kind of science for education.

Progressive educators favor, instead, an alter-

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native brand of research, based on personal, subjective classroom observation—"qualitative" research, the ed schools call it, to distinguish it from the empirical, experimental methods scientists use. This research always seems to validate the progressives' favorite classroom practices. Thus, in the writings of Alfie Kohn, perhaps the nation's most militant and widely read progressive-ed writer, the phrase "research has found" frequently appears, followed by the most absurd propositions. As in this, from Kohn's website: "Research has found three consistent effects of traditional grades: students think less creatively, they lose interest in what they're learning, and they try to avoid challenging tasks."

"Teaching that makes the rules of phonics clear will ultimately be more successful than teaching that does not."

Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein certainly don't share the progressives' critique of scientific objectivity, and they started their jobs with little informed knowledge of education at all. (One of the few things Bloomberg did say about education during his campaign was that schools should require uniforms—hardly a progressive-ed idea.) Because they began without preconceived educational theories, the most fateful decision they made as their administration took shape was the selection of Diana Lam as Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning at $250,000 per year, the same salary as Klein's. As I've said before ("Bloomberg and Klein Rush In," Spring 2003), Lam's record in her previous job heading Providence, Rhode Island's schools was nothing to write home about: 55 of the 56 schools in the district were listed by the state as "low performing" when she got there, and when she left three years later, only one of those schools had moved up a notch.

Notwithstanding Lam's lackluster record, Klein gave her control over most personnel and pedagogical decisions during the planning stages of Children First, while he himself focused on the structural reforms, and during early planning meetings with superintendents, says former district superintendent Betty Rosa, Klein chaired the sessions about organizational and administrative issues, while Lam presided over those focusing on the coming changes in curricula and teaching. It was clear that Lam took the progressive, constructivist approach to most pedagogical issues. She favored superintendents who were already using "whole language" reading curricula (the anti-phonics approach), as well as outside staff developers like Teachers College professor Lucy Calkins, a leading champion of the doctrine that all children are natural readers and writers, and that therefore it is criminal for them to be drilled in "boring" phonics lessons.

When the Department of Education announced its choice of a citywide K-3 reading program called "Month by Month Phonics" in February 2003, it was clear that this was Diana Lam's baby. It was also a perfect illustration of how truly you can't tell a book by its cover. Though the word "phonics" appears in the title, the slim workbook contains none of the systematic instruction in how to break words into letter/sound correspondence required by the new federal standards. Instead, it offers some unconnected shreds of phonics activities in an otherwise whole-language reading program—which is why it met with enthusiastic support from New York's phonics-hating progressive educators. The progressives were even happier that Lam had ditched a true scripted phonics program, "Success for All," that was in use (with promising results) in some of the city's lowest-performing schools, and that would easily have qualified for federal reading funds.

By giving the appearance of using some traditional phonics instruction, Lam's chosen program disarms parents and elected officials, who increasingly have been pressuring the schools for more traditional and reliable methods of reading

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instruction. That seems to be the effect it had on Mayor Bloomberg, who said in his stirring Martin Luther King Day speech introducing the new city-wide reforms that the K-3 reading curriculum would "include a daily focus on phonics." Since it is hard to imagine that our Republican mayor was looking for a confrontation with the Bush administration, it's likely that Bloomberg was told by Lam or Klein, or both, that the program contained enough phonics to pass muster with the feds. Either that or no one at the Tweed Courthouse bothered to think that $240 million in federal reading funds was at stake.

Since then, Klein and Bloomberg have doubtless spent many hours, and perhaps some sleepless nights, thinking about the problem they face from Month by Month Phonics and Lam's failure to brief them properly. When the city announced its choice, alarm bells went off among the scientific consultants who had helped frame the new federal reading requirements. The experts realized that if the nation's largest school district could pick a reading program so far from meeting the standard of "scientifically based research"—while abandoning Success for All, which did meet the standard—then the message about the new reading standards was not getting through.

Since then the message has been delivered, many times over. In meetings and letters over the past six months, reading scientists and consultants connected with both the federal Education Department (including Reid Lyon of the NIH) and the New York State Education Department have told city education officials where Month by Month Phonics falls short. In a February 4 letter to Bloomberg, Klein, and Lam, seven noted reading specialists, including three who served on the National Reading Panel and several who sit on review committees for implementing the Reading First standards, said that Month by Month is "woefully inadequate," "lacks the ingredients of a systematic phonics program," "lacks a research base," and "puts beginning readers at risk of failure in learning to read."

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. . . giving opportunity to millions of kids, including many disadvantaged children.

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That letter should have ended the matter. The federal government would be guilty of malpractice if it were to fund Month by Month Phonics after its own experts warned that it "puts beginning readers at risk of failure." That sentence should have led Bloomberg and Klein to reverse course immediately in the interests of the children and to fire Diana Lam.

Instead they initially viewed the experts' letter as a political problem. Accordingly, Lam's good friend Lucy Calkins of Teachers College rounded up a posse of 100 ed-school professors (some of whom stand to rake in, collectively, millions of dollars in staff-development fees from the Department of Education) to write a counter-letter, asserting that the National Reading Panel's scientific criteria "are much narrower than those which most educators subscribe to" (big news) and affirming the merits of Month by Month Phonics. The thought seemed to be that a letter from 100 education professors would outweigh one from a mere seven reading scientists—as if a plebiscite could resolve questions about the effectiveness of the reading program.

Throughout the summer, Bloomberg and Klein refused to cut their losses. They tried to finesse the problem by patching up the K-3 curriculum with a small supplementary phonics program that could be used at the teacher's discretion for up to six children who were struggling with the main program. But this didn't fool anyone. On September 2, three expert consultants to the State Education Department gave Lam their professional assessment not just of Month by Month Phonics but of the city's entire "Balanced Literacy" curriculum. (The state was about to get its Reading First funds and was providing this pre-review because, under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, each state education agency evaluates the local school districts' applications for their share of the federal money.) The state consultants' review was devastating. According to notes of the meeting, made available to *City Journal*, the experts told Lam that the city's literacy curriculum does not contain a "core, scientifically based reading program" and does not appear to be systematic or comprehensive. Instead, "the materials seem to reflect a philosophical framework," much of which is "contradictory" to "scientifically based research" on reading instruction. The experts warned that the curriculum would not meet the federal funding requirements.

One of the consultants at the meeting was Sally Shaywitz, a neuroscientist and professor of pediatrics at the Yale medical school. As co-directors of the Yale Center for the Study of Learning and Attention, she and her doctor husband, Bennett Shaywitz, have studied for 30 years how the brain learns to read. Using brain-imaging techniques and countless rigorously controlled experiments, whose findings have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, they have methodically studied the problems of poor readers in the same way that other medical researchers might study abnormalities in the pituitary gland. "We really do have the scientific knowledge now to ensure that every child becomes a good reader," Sally Shaywitz told me recently.

She summarizes that knowledge for the general reader in her eye-opening new book, *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level*. Shaywitz convincingly shows how reading programs that systematically teach children about the sounds of spoken language, and how letters represent these sounds, will enable just about every child, even those with reading difficulties, to become a better reader. It's hard to imagine any fair-minded person reading the book and not wondering why the "reading wars" are not over.

Though science must eventually win out over ideology, even in New York City, for the time being the Tweed train has left the station, carrying a lot of heavy ideological baggage. It will take someone in the administration brave enough to say he made a colossal mistake to turn the train around.

And the problem goes even deeper than Month by Month Phonics.

Since June, the city's Department of Education has undertaken a huge project to re-educate its 80,000 teachers, several thousand principals and assistant principals, 2,000 literacy and math coaches, 1,000 parent advocates, and scores of administrators in how to teach literacy and math. Each teacher has received a six-hour CD-ROM

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laying out the philosophy behind the new standardized curriculum and pedagogy that he or she is expected to follow to a T. In addition, thousands of teachers also attended one-week crash courses offered at some of the local graduate education schools, many of them taught by professors who signed the February letter in support of Month by Month Phonics. The rest received their indoctrination in sessions just when the school year began. The total cost of the department's re-education effort will exceed $60 million.

To examine the CD-ROM and peruse the three-inch-thick binder of more text and charts distributed to each teacher as school opened is to see the world of progressive education writ large, with all of its Romantic assumptions about how children learn, and its narrow and blinkered knowledge base. As the CD-ROM opens, Joel Klein announces: "This CD will walk you through the research upon which we based our decisions regarding our program choices." Diana Lam assures the teachers that the Department of Education is interested in an ongoing "dialogue" with them about all the education issues. The implication is that the Department of Education's search for the "best practices" was an open and intellectually serious process.

But in fact, in the section of the CD-ROM that lists academic sources, there isn't a single education writer who favors phonics for reading instruction or a curriculum emphasizing knowledge of facts. Teachers looking for references for further study won't find the names of Sally Shaywitz, Reid Lyon, the authors of the *Scientific American* article on reading instruction, Jean Chall, E. D. Hirsch, Diane Ravitch, or countless other distinguished scholars who believe that all children, but particularly economically and socially disadvantaged children, desperately need instruction in basic skills and factual knowledge to be able to function in an increasingly complex information economy.

"The federal government would be guilty of malpractice if it were to fund Month by Month Phonics."

Surprisingly, much of the text is dominated by the pedagogical principles of an education guru that not a single New York teacher is likely ever to have heard of before: Brian Cambourne, a professor of education at Wollongong (that's not a typo!) University in New South Wales and a leader of the constructivist and whole-language movement that dominates Australian public schools. He came to his theories, he says, when he discovered as a young teacher that many of his poorly performing students were actually quite bright. He began to meet with them outside the classroom. To his surprise, almost all demonstrated extraordinary competence at challenging tasks in the real adult world. The son of the local bookie, for example, was failing his math tests. "He couldn't learn basic math," said Cambourne, "but he could calculate the probability the Queen of Spades was in the deck faster than I could."

From this discovery, Cambourne concluded that children learn better in natural settings with a minimum amount of adult help. The role of the educator should be to create classroom conditions that stimulate children and most closely resemble the way adults work and learn. Thus, children should not sit in rows facing the teacher, but rather the room should be arranged with work areas where children can construct their own knowledge.

So critical does the CD-ROM deem Cambourne's theories that it instructs teachers to go through a checklist to make sure their classroom practices meet the professor's "conditions for learning." Which of four scenarios most accurately describes how your classroom is set up? the disc asks. If the teacher can claim "a variety of center-based activities, for purposeful learning using different strategies, and for students to flow as needed," she can pat herself on the back. But if her classroom is set up "for lecture with rows facing forward," she must don the dunce cap.

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In a revealing magazine interview, Cambourne distinguishes among three kinds of literacy that schools can foster. "Functional Literacy" produces adults who can succeed in the real world and hold challenging jobs—which to most New York teachers would be a considerable achievement for their students. But Cambourne dismisses this competence as inadequate, because it produces "dependent and compliant learners." The next form of literacy, which produces adults who can enjoy great works of literature, also is insufficient for Cambourne, because it merely "produces a citizenry that admires and values individual achievement and expertise." What all conscientious teachers ought to strive to inculcate in their students is "literacy for social equity and social justice," a literacy that can deconstruct language and show how it is used to maintain power and privilege in our current society. In striving for this "critical" literacy, Cambourne acknowledges that his own work "is based on the political prejudices I have and these must of course impact what I research."

Now, you might say, this is a red herring. Surely the New York City Department of Education is not trying to foster Professor Cambourne's left-wing political views in its students or teachers. Point granted. Still, Cambourne's constructivist assumptions, which are now being implemented throughout the city, are not just honest mistakes about what works best in the classroom but are indeed political in the deepest meaning. Progressive educators like Cambourne do not insist that more learning occurs when children work in groups and in natural settings because they have followed the evidence, since there is no scientific evidence to support the claim. Quite to the contrary, as much as science tells us anything on this issue, it tells us that, particularly for disadvantaged children, direct, explicit instruction works better in the classroom.

Rejecting science, rejecting objectivity, what progressive educators actually mean when they nevertheless say that "student-centered" classrooms work is that they like the social outcomes they hope these classrooms will produce—adults who

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Current school-reform efforts should recall what produced that century of success.

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have learned to be independent "critical thinkers" about their own society and who will therefore be eager to help reform the world and make it a better place. There's nothing wrong with healing the world, but the progressives have put the cart before the horse. There will be little improvement in our inner cities unless the kids learn to read and acquire other minimum skills.

It's a tragedy that this truth seems to be lost on the Department of Ed's pedagogues. With the zeal of a Dictatorship of Virtue, they strive to turn every city classroom into something that their favorite Australian professor would endorse.

This September's re-education sessions for teachers drove home the party line relentlessly: "Your students must not be sitting in rows. You must not stand at the head of the class. You must not do 'chalk and talk' at the blackboard. You must have a 'workshop' in every single reading period. Your students must be 'active learners,' and they must work in groups." Even more recently, principals and department heads from schools supposedly successful enough to be exempt from the new curriculum were herded off to Teachers College to be harangued about how students must work in group workshops and teachers must transform themselves from the "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side."

Some brave teachers have dared to object. At Junior High School 44 in Manhattan, one teacher tried pointing out, quite reasonably, that some teachers felt more comfortable and could get better results through more traditional methods. The school's literacy coach responded: "This is the way it is. Everyone will do it this way, or you can change schools."

Even progressive-ed supporter Norman Scott, publisher of a newsletter that criticizes UFT president Randi Weingarten from the left, is appalled. "There are many valid points to child-centered teaching and learning," he says. "But the new 'Cult' at the DOE has taken what could have been a progressive curriculum and scripted it, forcing it down the throats of teachers who are being told everything is 'non-negotiable.'" You might say, in the words of the first great progressive-ed reformer (and political radical) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that the DOE's aim is to "force them to be free."

The attempted reign of terror in the name of progressivism has turned into pure farce in some schools. Michael Laforgia, a supervisor in charge of ten schools in Manhattan's Region 9, took the handbooks very seriously. In preparation for a site visit to Seward Park High School, one of the city's most violent schools, he sent a memo to one of the school's assistant principals indicating the kind of classroom environment he would be looking for. Since apparently Brian Cambourne wasn't quite progressive enough for him, he offered helpful hints from the works of constructivist guru Alfie Kohn. For example: "A learner-centered classroom might have chairs around tables to facilitate interaction, walls covered with student work, a hum of activity and ideas being exchanged, and a general emphasis on thoughtful exploration of complicated issues."

The idea that one of the education department's top administrators thought that Alfie Kohn's student-ruled classrooms would suit a school with 600 reported incidents last year of student disruption or violence provided the demoralized staff with some comic relief. As the memo went around the school, some of the teachers wrote anonymous comments on it, like samizdat. Next to Laforgia's question—"Is the teacher teaching the text or the students?"—one teacher wrote, "Is this a binary question?" Another wrote, "Duh . . . aren't we supposed to do both?" Kohn's question, "Who is solving the students' reading and writing problems?" elicited the response: "Clearly not the Dept. of Education." As in other soft totalitarianisms, gallows humor has become a means to cope with an absurd and fearful situation.

But Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein never get to hear the jokes. They are basking in the applause they are receiving from elite opinion makers who have no idea what is going on in the classrooms. The Bloomberg top-down

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revolution still looks like a great school-reform breakthrough to a remarkably wide spectrum of New York City education watchers, including the editorial boards of the city's major dailies, the business community, most of the local education advocacy groups, and of course the graduate education schools that normally rail against top-down mandates and political control in education.

Two of the nation's big philanthropies, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Eli Broad Foundation, are heaping not just praise on Bloomberg and Klein, but also barrels full of cash—over $70 million of it from the Gates foundation. And at a recent lavish Rainbow Room luncheon for several hundred Gotham movers and shakers, California billionaire Eli Broad praised Bloomberg and Klein as effective educational "change agents," predicted that they'd succeed in turning around the city's public schools, and presented them with a check for $5 million on top of the $4 million he had already contributed.

Even some school reformers who would prefer choice and vouchers have been willing at least to "give Mike a chance." Since we're not likely to get vouchers or other competition-based reforms in New York, they seem to be saying, perhaps a regimented, "teacher-proof" approach gives the city its second-best chance of forcing the pace of school improvement in the classroom.

But by now it has become abundantly clear that there will be no improvement with Month by Month Phonics, with Diana Lam running teaching and learning, and with Klein's and Bloomberg's Dictatorship of Virtue.

First, the system's best teachers will resent being treated like robots and are likely to leave, while the mediocrities will follow orders. Moreover, because of their dictatorial treatment of rank-and-file teachers, Bloomberg and Klein will find it harder to win work-rule concessions from the union. Teachers who might otherwise be appealed to over the heads of the union leadership will now cling to the work rules as their only protection from what they see as an arbitrary and oppressive system.

Second, because authoritarian regimes tend to become intolerant of dissenting opinion or even of free discussion, the system's leaders are likely not to be listening when there is bad news they should be aware of and trying to correct.

"The best teachers will resent being treated like robots and are likely to leave, while the mediocrities will stay."

Third, the authoritarian curriculum stands in contradiction to one of the city's proudest education reforms. In a gala ceremony in September, Bill Gates announced that he was giving the city another $51 million to create 200 new small high schools and middle schools, whose fundamental premise will be that each will have a unique theme or educational approach, and each will have some degree of autonomy from the central system. Yet even as the mayor was taking Gates's check, his education department was pressuring dozens of the city's existing small schools (some of them already Gates-supported) to align their curricula and teaching methods with the new standardized citywide approach.

Finally, Bloomberg and Klein's failure to choose a program that could improve reading instruction in the early grades puts at risk almost everything else they are trying to do. Sometime in the next two months, the mayor and chancellor will have to apply to the state education department for the city's share of the federal Reading First funds. It will be a watershed decision for their administration. Will they have the courage to admit they made a mistake, correct the reading program, and get rid of Diana Lam? Or will they make a bad situation worse by trying to handle the problem politically and thus inflict further harm on the city's children? ■

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Why History Has No End

Islamic rage and Western disunity show that reports of history's demise are greatly exaggerated.

Victor Davis Hanson

Writing as the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, Francis Fukuyama famously announced the "End of History." The world, he argued, was fast approaching the final stage of its political evolution. Western democratic capitalism had proved itself superior to all its historical rivals and now would find acceptance across the globe. Here were the communist regimes dropping into the dustbin of history, Fukuyama noted, while dictatorships and statist economies in Asia and South America were toppling too. A new world consumer class was evolving, leaving behind such retrograde notions as nationhood and national honor. As a result, war would grow rare or even vanish: what was there left to fight about? Gone, or going fast, was the old stuff of history—the mercurial, often larger-than-life men who sorted out on the battlefield the conflicts of traditions and values that once divided nations. Fukuyama acknowledged that the End of History would have a downside. Ennui would set in, as we sophisticated consumers became modern-day lotus-eaters, hooked on channel surfing and material comforts. But after the wars of the twentieth century, the prospect of peaceful, humdrum boredom seemed a pretty good deal.

How naive all this sounds today. Islamist hijackers crashing planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the looming threat of worse terror outrages, have shown that a global embrace of the values of modern democracy is a distant hope, and anything but predetermined. Equally striking, it's not just the West and the non-democratic world that are not converging; the West itself is pulling apart. Real differences between America and Europe about what kind of lives citizens can and should live not only persist but are growing wider.

A Fukuyaman might counter that September 11 was only a bump on the road to universal democracy, prosperity, and peace. Whether the Middle East's mullahs and fascists know it or not, this argument would run, the budding spiritual and material desires of their masses for all things Western eventually will make them more like us—though how long this will take is unknown. It's impossible ultimately to disprove such a long-range contention, of course. But look around. Fukuyama's global village has seen a lot of old-fashioned ethnic, religious, and political violence since history's purported end in 1989: Afghanistan, Algeria, Colombia, Iraq, Russia, Rwanda, Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, to name just a handful of flash points. Plato may have been right when he remarked in his *Laws* that

Europe's totalitarian leaders, such as Napoleon in his imperial, almost godlike getup (right), . . .

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peace, not war, is the exception in human affairs.

In fact, rather than bringing us all together, as Fukuyama predicted, the spread of English as the global lingua franca, of accessible, inexpensive high technology, and of universal fashion and communication has led to chaos as often as calm. These developments have incited envy, resentment, and anger among traditional societies. The men and women of these societies sense—as how could they not when encountering the image of Britney Spears gyrating or the subversive idea of free speech?—an affront to the power of the patriarch, mullah, or other hierarchical figure who demands respect based solely on religious dogma, gender, or class.

The new technologies, despite what Fukuyama would say, do not make modern liberal democrats out of our enemies but simply allow them to do their destructive work more effectively. Even though Islamists and other of globalization's malcontents profess hatred for capitalist democracy, they don't hesitate to use some of the West's technological marvels against the West itself. How much easier it has become to plot and shoot and bomb and disrupt and incite with all those fancy gadgets! Flight simulators made it simpler for medieval-minded men, decked out in Nikes and fanny packs, to ram a kiloton or two of explosive power into the New York skyline. Both Usama and Saddam have employed modern mass media to cheer and spur the killing of infidels.

Leaving aside the mullahs and Arab despots, where is there much proof that freedom must follow in the train of affluence, as Fukuyama holds? Left-wing capitalists in China, their right-wing counterparts in Singapore, or their ex-KGB counterparts in Russia certainly do not assume that their throngs of consumers are natural democrats, and so far there's little to say that they're wrong. And where is the evidence that these consumers will inevitably become comfort-loving pacifists? Democracy and market reforms seem only to have emboldened India to confront Pakistan's terrorist-spawning *madrassa* culture. Rich and free Japan is considering rearming rather than writing more checks to stop North Korean missiles from zooming through its airspace.

America, too, seems as subject to history as ever. Abandoning the belief that it's always possible to keep thuggish regimes in check with words and bribes, it is returning to military activism, seeking to impose democracy—or at least some kind of decent government—on former terrorist-sponsoring nations, instead of waiting for the end of history somehow to make it spring up. Sure, postmodern, peroxide-topped Jasons and tongue-pierced Nicoles sulk at malls from coast to coast—bored, materialistic Fukuyamans all. But by contrast there are those American teens of the Third Mechanized Division, wearing their Ray-Bans and blaring rock, who rolled through Iraq like Patton's Third Army reborn, pursuing George W. Bush's vision of old-fashioned military victory, liberation, and nation building.

What about Europe? Surely *there* we can see Fukuyama's post-historical future shaping up, in an increasingly hedonistic life-style that puts individual pleasure ahead of national pride or strong convictions, in a general embrace of pacifism, and in support for such multinational institutions as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, and the European Union, which promise affluence and peace based on negotiation and consensus. Europeans say that sober reflection on their own checkered past has taught them to reject wars of the nation-state, to mediate, not deter, and to trust in Enlightenment rationality instead of primitive emotions surrounding God and country.

Look closer, though, and you'll discover the pulse of history still beating beneath Europe's postmodern surface—and beating stronger daily. During the cold war, it is important to remember, the looming threat of the Soviet Union kept in check the political ambitions and rivalries of Europe's old nations. The half-century of peace from 1945 to 1989 was not so much a dividend of new attitudes as the result of the presence of a quarter-million American troops, who really did keep the Russians out and Germany's military down. Facing a mutual foe armed with the most advanced weaponry, fielding an enormous army, embodying a proselytizing revolutionary ideology, and willing to shed the blood of 30 million of its own citizens did wonders to paper over less pressing differences. If France and Germany don't stand as

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squarely with us in the War on Terror as they did in the cold war, it's in part because al-Qaida and its rogue-nation supporters, menacing as they are, don't threaten Europe's capital cities with thousands of nuclear missiles, as did the Soviets.

With the evil empire's collapse and America's gradual withdrawal (the U.S. has closed 32 bases in Europe and reduced its troop presence there by 65 percent since a cold-war high), the European nations' age-old drive for status, influence, and power has slowly started to reassert itself, increasing tensions on the Continent. German chancellor Gerhard Schröder proclaims "decisions will be made in Berlin," French president Jacques Chirac shakes a finger at Poles and Rumanians for not following France's leadership, and Italian and German politicians hurl schoolyard insults at one another. The Eastern Europeans, bordered by a reunified Germany and a nationalist Russia, wonder whether American guns might not provide better insurance than the European Union should the aggressive urges of historical enemies prove merely dormant and not extinct. It will be interesting to see whether all of Europe or just some of its historically more bellicose states will boost defense expenditures above the parsimonious European average of 0.5 percent of GNP.

"Islamists don't hesitate to use some of the West's technological marvels against the West itself."

Europe's resurgent political ambitions and passions are even more apparent in the Continent's relations with the U.S.—relations that, in the controversy over military action in Iraq, worsened to the point where France and Germany openly opposed and undermined their ally of a half-century.

Such behavior hardly squares with the End-of-History model, even though the Europeans were making post-historical complaints that the United States was acting like the Lone Ranger in threatening to go to war in Iraq without the approval of the "world community," and even though the European position was that the diplomacy of the international community, working through the United Nations, could eventually have handled the Iraq problem without the terrible cost of war. But in truth, the European opposition to the U.S. over Iraq and the fuss the European nations made about international organizations and diplomacy had more to do with *realpolitik*—the desire of those nations to answer American influence and champion their own power—than they did with any belief in the obsolescence of national identity or military force. How else could the once-great nations of Europe counter American influence, given the present comparative weakness of their arms and the rigidities of their economies, than by shackling the "hyperpower" with the mandates of the "world community"?

Indeed, for all the self-righteously idealistic rhetoric that French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin spouted at the U.N. last spring, the real reason that he strong-armed the Third World nations to vote against the American push for military action in Iraq was to recapture a little French *puissance* on the cheap. (Recall that he penned a hagiography of that ultimate French nationalist, Napoleon.) With just one wee aircraft carrier, the *Charles de Gaulle*, in its national arsenal, France finds it wiser and more financially feasible—for now—to exert its clout through the U.N. than to build lots of new carriers to try to match the U.S. in military might.

The dustup between the old Europeans and the U.S. over Iraq, in which Europe's historical national ambitions played an indisputable role, only widened an already existing transatlantic rift, the product of substantial historical, cultural, and political differences between Europe's democracies and our own. Resentment of the U.S. runs deep on the Continent. In part, this is a psychological residue of World War II. With nations,

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as with people, no good deed goes unpunished. France would not exist today without Normandy Beach—a permanent blow to its self-esteem. American arms both destroyed Germany and helped make it the flourishing nation it is today. Should Germans hate us or thank us for saving them from themselves? Both France and Germany would have become a playground for Russian soldiers and tanks if not for the U.S.'s military presence in NATO, and for proud European nations to become so dependent must surely rankle. Since the end of the cold war, it has become harder for European nations to keep this wounded pride in check—though of course the resentments have been intertwined with genuine gratitude and friendship toward America.

European animosity toward the U.S. also has a snobbish component—an anti-bourgeois disdain that is the dual legacy of Europe's socialist Left and *ancien régime* Right. Notice how the latest "nuanced" European criticisms of America often start out on the Left—we're too hegemonic and don't care about the aspirations of poor countries—and then, in a blink of an eye, they veer to the aristocratic Right: we're a motley sort, promoting vulgar food and mass entertainment to corrupt the tastes of nations that have a much more refined tradition. That Europeans now eat at McDonald's and love Hollywood trash—that's simply the result of American corporate brainwashing.

Our old-fashioned belief in right and wrong along with our willingness to act on that belief also infuriates the Europeans. Americans have an ingrained distrust of moral laxity masquerading as "sophistication," and our dissident religious heritage has made us comfortable with making clear-cut moral choices in politics—"simplistic" choices, Euros would say. It is precisely because we recognize the existence of evil, pure and simple, that we feel justified in using force to strip power from ogres like Mullah Omar and Saddam Hussein—or kill them, like Uday and Qusay Hussein. Europeans, cynical in politics and morals, think that this attitude makes us loose cannons.

. . . are a far contrast from the down-to-earth individualism of democratic American leaders like rail-splitter Abe Lincoln (left).

But paradoxically, the most consequential reason Continental Europe and America are pulling apart is the European Union itself. European visionaries have had a long history of dreaming up and seeking to implement nationalist or socialist utopias—schemes, doomed to fail, that have trampled individuals under the heavy boot of the state as the price of creating a "new man" and a perfect world, bringing history to fulfillment. The murderous fraternity of the French Revolution, nineteenth-century Bonapartism, Marxism and modern communism, Francoism, Italian fascism, Nazism—all these coercive programs for remaking the world sprang from what seems an ineradicable Continental impulse.

The European Union, benign as it currently seems, is the latest manifestation of this utopian spirit. The E.U.'s greatest hubris is to imagine that it can completely overcome the historical allegiances and political cultures of Europe's many nations by creating a "European" man, freed entirely from local attachments and resentments, conflicting interests, ethnicity, and differing visions of the good life, and wedded instead to rationality, egalitarianism, secularism, and the enlightened rule of wise bureaucrats. No less utopian is the E.U.'s assumption, contrary to all economic reason, that a 35-hour workweek, retirement at 55, ever-longer vacations, extensive welfare benefits, and massive economic regulation can go together with swelling prosperity. All that makes this squaring of the circle plausible even in the short term is Europe's choice to spend little on defense, which allows more money to go to welfare programs—a choice itself resting on another utopian assumption: that the world has entered a new era in which disagreements between nations can be resolved peacefully, through the guidance and pressure of international organizations—above all, the United Nations. In reality, of course, Europe relies on the United States to take care of many of its defense needs.

Like Europe's brave new worlds of the past, the E.U. is in fact a deeply anti-democratic mechanism that elites can use to grab power while mouthing platitudes about "brotherhood," designed to appeal to the citizen's desire to participate in some kind of higher vision. The E.U.'s transnational government has nothing in place to ensure

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an institutional opposition—no bicameral legislature, no independent review by high courts, no veto power for individual member states. This authoritarian arrangement allows the E.U. to rule by *diktat* rather than by consensus and review. Rural Montanans can complain to their congressmen that Washington is out of touch; to whom will Estonians complain that Brussels has no right to decide what goes on their restaurant menus?

The E.U.'s disdain for democracy on the Continent carries over to its relations with the rest of the world. Even as Jews duck Muslim mobs in French cities, E.U. apparatchiks can slur democratic Israel as fascist, and Berlin and Paris can triangulate with Iran's mullocracy. Only contempt for the messy give-and-take of democracy, plus a nasty dose of anti-Semitism, can explain why the despotic Arafat is more popular than the democratic Sharon among E.U. elites.

As for the U.S.—the democratic nation *par excellence* (so to speak)—the E.U. is contemptuous, so much so that anti-Americanism often seems to be the union's founding principle. The E.U. channels all the wounded pride, resentment, and snobbish scorn that Europeans feel toward Americans into its grand ambition to stand up to the U.S. on the world stage. Regardless of whether Bush or Clinton is in charge, we hear boos from Athens to Berlin. Was it Durban or Kyoto that angered Europeans? Or maybe it was the execution of Timothy McVeigh, John Ashcroft's hunt for terrorists, the lack of good cuisine at Guantanamo, or the failure to find WMDs?

It's understandable, really, that the E.U. has set itself against America. Nothing is more foreign to European statist utopianism than the American emphasis on individual liberty, local self-government, equality under the law, and slow, imperfect reform. America has always been immune to utopian fantasies—indeed, it has always opposed them. The skeptical Founding Fathers, influenced by the prudence and love of liberty of the British Enlightenment, built the American republic based on the *anti*-utopian belief that men are fallible and self-interested, love their property, and can best manage their affairs locally. The Founders saw the café theorizing of Continental elites and French philosophers as a danger to good government, which requires not some grand, all-encompassing blueprint but rather institutional checks and balances and a citizenry of perennially vigilant individual citizens.

From America's very beginnings in the wilderness of the New World, that spirit of rugged individualism and self-reliance has found a home here, and it stands diametrically opposed to European collectivism in all its forms—from the organic, hierarchical community extolled by the old European Right to the socialist commune on the Left to the E.U.'s rationalist super-state. Of course, our self-reliant ethos sometimes can seem less than fraternal, as I can attest from personal experience. I farm, among other things, raisins. Recently, the price of raisins crashed below its level of some 40 years ago. My friends casually suggested that I pack it in, uproot an ancestral vineyard, move on to something else—not, as in Europe, circle the tractor around the capitol, block traffic, or seek government protection and subsidies as a representative of a hallowed way of life under threat from globalization. But who can plausibly deny that America's astounding dynamism and productivity result from this deep-seated belief that individual men and women are responsible for their own destinies and have no birthright from the state to be affluent?

The growing split between the U.S. and Europe that has resulted from these trends is of seismic importance. Though the effort to create a "European Union" may offer superficial relief when one considers Europe's bloody history, it in fact constitutes a potential long-term threat to the U.S. and to the world. To the extent that this project succeeds in forging a common European identity, anti-Americanism will likely be its lodestar. But of course, it ultimately will fail, because for most people being a European could never be as meaningful, have such rich cultural and historical resonance, as being a Frenchman or a German. And even in failure, the project could be catastrophic: by denigrating a healthy and natural sense of nationhood, the E.U. risks unleashing a militaristic chauvinism in some of its member states—threatening not only the U.S. but

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Europe as well. When a German chancellor wins reelection campaigning as an anti-American and trumpeting a new "German way," it's not hard to see behind his success an embittered populace, motivated by the belief that German cultural energy and economic prosperity (increasingly encumbered by the corporate welfare statism that is the real "German way") don't win sufficient status on the world stage, where military might counts the most.

Behind the pretense that a dash of multinationalism and pacifist platitudes have suddenly transformed Europe into some new Fukuyama-type End-of-History society, it is still mostly the continent of old, torn by envy and pride, conjuring up utopian fantasies of pan-European rule at the same time as nationalist resentments fester. That's what makes the question of European rearmament so crucial. Should Europe rearm—and I think it will, either collectively or nation by nation, as America reduces its military presence—it has the population, economic power, and (most important) the know-how to field forces as good as our own. If Germany invested 4 to 5 percent of its GNP in defense, its new Luftwaffe would not resemble Syria's air force. Two or three French aircraft carriers—snickers about the petite *Charles de Gaulle* aside—could destroy the combined navies of the Middle East. We may laugh today at the unionized Belgian military of potbellied cooks and barbers, or scoff at German pacifism, but this is still Europe, which gave birth to the Western military tradition—the most lethal the world has ever known.

"America has always been immune to utopian fantasies—indeed, it has always opposed them."

How a re-militarized Europe views the United States is therefore important. A powerful, well-adjusted Europe, made up of nations that would curb arms sales to rogue regimes, fight shoulder to shoulder with us against Islamic terror, warn North Korea, and stop funneling money to Arafat's Palestinian Authority would make the world a better place. An armed Europe of renascent nationalisms, or one pursuing the creation of a transnational continental super-state, could prove our greatest bane since 1941. That Europe is now militarily weak and hostile does not mean that it will not soon be either powerful and friendly—or powerful and hostile.

These emerging trends require the United States to rethink its relations with Europe. NATO's American architects rightly believed that the organization they created not only would protect Europeans from Russians and Europeans from one another, but shield us from them as well. We need comparable hard-headedness in thinking of what steps we should take to improve relations with Europe—and protect ourselves at the same time.

Completing the removal of most of our troops from Western Europe is a good first move. It would lessen the Europeans' sense of impotence and thus diminish envy and encourage maturity. (Leaving a few bases in Britain, Italy, and Spain will allow us to retain some vital transportation and communication facilities—and have monitoring stations in place to gauge the tempo of the inevitable rearming.) We can redeploy the freed-up troops in strategically vital areas of the Middle East.

Second, there's nothing wrong with bilateralism, so we should treat the E.U. the way we treat Yasser Arafat: smile, and deal with someone else. We should seek good relations and coalitions with willing European states, presuming that we can be friendly with many, even though we are not friendly with all. By offering an alternative to European nations that might worry about the E.U.'s anti-democratic tendencies, we can perhaps limit the union's worst behavior.

Finally, if the Europeans insist on empowering unaccountable international organizations like the U.N., we should at least try to make them

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more accountable and reflective of political realities, making it harder for the Europeans to use the mask of internationalism to pursue their own power-political ends. The permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, for example, should include India and Japan, countries that by all measures of population, economic power, and military potential warrant parity with current permanent member France. If the General Assembly is always going on about democracy and human rights, moreover, why not put constant pressure on some of its more benighted members to extend human and democratic rights to their own peoples?

A tough-minded stance toward Europe will accept that a Germany or a France will not always be our ally; given our respective histories and differing views of the state, we should not be surprised to meet with hostility—and when it comes, we should recognize that it may have more to do with what we represent as a nation than any particular policies that we have pursued. The West has experienced similar intramural conflict throughout its history: between Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians; between Atlantic-port New Worlders and Mediterranean galley states; between the French and the British as they triangulated with the Ottomans—to say nothing of the mad continental utopians, warring on the free societies of Europe and the world.

Ultimately, America seeks neither a hostile nor a subservient Europe, but one of confident democratic allies like the U.K.: allies that provide us not only with military partnership but trustworthy guidance too. The U.N. has never really either prevented or ended a war; our democratic friends in World War I and II, along with NATO, sometimes have. We stand a better chance of bringing about such a future if we remember from history that man's nature, for all the centuries' talk about human perfectibility, is unchanging—and that therefore history never ends. ■

GIRAUDON / ART RESOURCE, NY

Europe's violent utopian episodes, such as the French Revolution, have nothing in common with America's emphasis on slow, imperfect reform.

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DÉMOLITION DE LA BASTILLE.

e par le Peuple le 14 Juillet 1789. on se mit tout de suite à la démolir,

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Leaving the Mentally Ill Out in the Cold

We know how to help them. Too bad the president's commission didn't stand up and say so.

E. Fuller Torrey

The report of President Bush's Commission on Mental Health, appointed to take stock of the nation's broken mental health system and "to recommend improvements," is a tremendous disappointment. True, the report, released in July, acknowledges that the system is "fragmented, disconnected and often inadequate," and it rightly notes that nearly half of all homeless people have "had a mental health problem within the previous year" and that the nation's prisons and jails teem with inmates suffering from serious mental illnesses. But as Yogi Berra might well have commented, this is "*déjà vu* all over again": President Carter's mental health commission made similar points 25 years ago. In fact, the 2003 report, reflecting the misguided thinking of Washington's mental health establishment, fails to gauge the full extent of the mental health system's crisis, and its 19 recommendations are a hodgepodge of boilerplate and evasion. All that saves the report from being a total waste is a hint that suggests a better way forward.

Read through the report and you quickly discover just how many of its recommendations are mere platitudes, crafted to patch over disagreements within Washington's fractious mental health community over such controversies as compulsory treatment and the legitimate purview of "mental health." We must "promote the mental health of young children," the report declares, as if anybody would object to such a goal. Or: we

JIM GOLDBERG/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Key to solving the homeless problem is reforming the nation's mental health–care system.

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The untreated mentally ill can be dangerous, as John Hinckley proved when he tried to assassinate President Reagan in 1981.

need to "create a comprehensive state mental health plan"—neglecting to mention that states already must have such plans in place in order to qualify for federal mental health grants.

Other proposals are marvels of evasion. For example, the commission calls for a national campaign to "reduce the stigma" of mental illness, without addressing what multiple studies (and common sense) show to be the main cause of that stigma: untreated mentally ill individuals committing acts of violence—from pushing subway commuters into the path of oncoming trains, as has happened time and again in New York in recent years, to shooting the president, as John Hinckley did in 1981. The psychiatrically disabled—less than 1 percent of the U.S. population—commit 1,000 murders a year in America, 4 to 5 percent of the nation's total yearly homicides.

The commission says nothing about such incidents because it is politically incorrect within the psychiatric community to link violence with mental illness. These are "isolated incidents," mental health professionals like to say, and focusing on them itself leads to stigmatizing the mentally ill. But this ostrich-like response doesn't make the problem go away. The typical citizen is well aware that untreated mentally ill individuals can be dangerous, whether professionals want to speak about it or not. All he needs to do is open his morning paper. To try to combat stigma without dealing with the violence committed by the mentally ill is like trying to control a flood without finding out where the water is coming from.

version to unpleasant truths mars the report in other areas too. The commission frequently emphasizes that mental health "consumers" should be able to "choose their own programs" in a system based on their "needs and preferences." That's fine for the 50 percent of individuals with schizophrenia or manic depression (the two diseases that make up most severe mental illness) who are aware that they are sick. But research shows that the other 50 percent suffer from an impairment in brain function that interferes with self-awareness. Such individuals rarely seek treatment or accept medication voluntarily, since they don't think that there is anything wrong with them. They make up the vast majority of

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the 35 percent of the homeless and 16 percent of the incarcerated who are mentally ill.

For such individuals, mandatory treatment laws are essential—laws that require severely mentally ill people to comply with their treatment and take the medication that keeps their symptoms under control or else to face forced hospitalization. These laws protect both society and patient. Since New York passed "Kendra's Law" in 1999—mandatory treatment legislation named after receptionist Kendra Webdale, hurled to her death under a New York City subway train by a man suffering from untreated schizophrenia—the state has seen a 77 percent decline in hospitalizations for mental illness, 85 percent fewer arrests of mentally ill individuals, and a substantial drop in the number of mentally ill homeless. Under New Hampshire's coercive-treatment law, episodes of violence by the mentally ill have plummeted 81 percent. Many states now have such laws on the books.

"It is politically incorrect within the psychiatric community to link violence with mental illness."

Yet despite mandatory treatment's proven effectiveness, the president's commission makes no mention of it—or, for that matter, of the self-awareness problem. The mental health establishment whose mindset dominates the commission remains under the sway of the 1960s-bred horror of coercive treatment as an infringement of the "rights" of the mentally ill. To which psychiatrist Darold Treffert offers the perfect rejoinder: "What kind of 'freedom' is it to be wandering the streets severely mentally ill, deteriorating, and getting warmth from a steel grate or food from a garbage can?" That's not freedom, Treffert rightly says, "that's abandonment."

Perhaps the commission's most glaring weakness, however, is its failure to confront directly the irrational and counterproductive way the nation funds the mental health system. Nobody can plausibly claim that the system lacks money. When the first President's Commission on Mental Health issued its report in 1961, the nation spent approximately $1 billion a year on mental health care. Converted to today's dollars and allowing for the increase in population over the last four decades, that would work out to roughly $8 billion in 2003. Yet in 1997 alone, the U.S. spent *$71 billion* on "treating mental illness"—nearly nine times more in constant dollars than in 1961. The amount spent is swelling at the rate of $3 billion a year, alarming even by federal budget standards. Given the "often inadequate" treatment of the mentally ill that the commission mentions, though, it's clear that this largesse hasn't done much good.

Part of the reason is the outdated ideas of the psychiatric community. But government bureaucracy bears much of the blame too. Federal officials at the Baltimore headquarters of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services dole out two-thirds of that $71 billion and decide what services to fund. These bureaucrats lack adequate knowledge of local conditions and resources, which vary widely from place to place, and they have had no reliable way of determining whether a program actually helps patients or is cost-effective—a recipe for inefficiency and waste. (See "Reinventing Mental Health Care," Autumn 1999.)

It wasn't always this way. Back in the early sixties, state governments paid 98 percent of the total cost of the mental health system. But the states soon discovered that, by closing down beds in state psychiatric hospitals, they could shift the burden of paying for psychiatric patients to four federal programs that, from the 1960s on, offered benefits to mentally ill individuals, but only if they were *not* receiving care in a state mental hospital—Medicaid, Medicare, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security Disability Income. In a classic example of unintended consequences, these federal programs, originally designed to give a little help to newly deinstitutionalized mentally ill patients, soon took over the primary

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The relatives of a pregnant doctor raped and strangled at Bellevue Hospital by a mentally ill homeless man hear the verdict that the hospital's security was not to blame.

responsibility for funding the whole system. No longer did mental health officials ask, "What is best for patients?" The question now became, "What will the federal government pay for?"

The consequences for the mentally ill have been grim. State mental institutions, under pressure from state governments to cut costs, released scores of patients who should have remained hospitalized, and they had little incentive to find out what happened to them afterward. Many fell through the cracks of the system, landing in jail or on the streets. Making matters worse, the federal SSI and SSDI paychecks, worth $500 and $700 a month, respectively, went to patients with no strings attached, and often fueled drug or alcohol habits instead of treatment.

Yet though the President's Commission on Mental Health says little about this perverse funding arrangement, its report does have hidden within it a signpost that points the way toward a better system. Crucially—though almost in passing—the commission says that the federal government should grant states "increased flexibility" in spending federal money on the mentally ill, "in exchange for greater accountability and improved outcomes."

Here, truly, is ground for hope. Nothing would improve mental health care more swiftly than giving states not just greater flexibility—the commission is far too cautious—but as much control as is politically feasible in spending mental health–care dollars, and then holding them accountable by measuring various outcomes, which could include quality-of-life ratings by patients and their families, the number of homeless and incarcerated mentally ill, the employment rate of mentally ill people, quality of housing, and so on. The federal government would need to collect accurate data from the states in all these areas, woefully lacking at present. The feds would then reward states that did a good job by giving them more funding; states that let homeless mentally ill individuals use government funds to stay drunk and live on the streets would lose money. As a first step, federal officials could set up an experimental program in half a dozen states and analyze the results.

Local innovation, as the commission recognizes,

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has already created most of the nation's best mental health programs. A prime example: the so-called clubhouse model, which originated with New York's Fountain House. In these community facilities, mentally ill people can come together in a low-key, friendly atmosphere and receive vocational and social help. Clubhouse staff don't prescribe medicine or provide therapy, but they do remind clients to take their medicine and are on hand to give guidance and encouragement. These inexpensive programs are a big success, as their clients' high employment and low re-hospitalization rates prove.

Another example of an effective local initiative: Wisconsin's Assertive Community Treatment teams. Each team consists of ten professionals or paraprofessionals, including a psychiatrist, linked to a hospital or community mental health center. Rather than wait for seriously mentally ill people to seek out treatment themselves, the teams search for the untreated in homeless shelters and jails, and get them on the right medication and treatment routine. The teams also visit recently released hospital patients to help them ease back into society. Thanks to its 120 ACT squads, Wisconsin has slashed re-hospitalization rates 90 percent.

Turning responsibility for mental health over to the states, while holding them accountable, would unleash many more such policy experiments, just as states that received waivers from the federal government to pursue welfare initiatives during the late 1980s and nineties came up with effective welfare innovations that set the stage for federal welfare reform.

If the commission had not been so timid and obsessed with mental health P.C., it might have made several additional recommendations. Treatment programs should give priority to patients with the most severe illnesses. After all, these are the individuals who, without treatment, wind up homeless, in jail, or bashing some stranger over the head with a brick.

SSI and SSDI benefits to mentally ill people should also be tied to compliance with a treatment plan, so that public money no longer subsidizes substance abuse. As for the seemingly inexorable swelling of those two programs, plus Medicaid and Medicare, it's past time to freeze federal funds for treating mental illnesses, except for increases to keep up with inflation. The current yearly sum of $71 billion—if spent properly, instead of being wasted on counseling for the worried well and the administrative costs of managed care—is more than enough to provide decent care for all mentally ill Americans.

"Local innovation, the commission recognizes, has already created most of the nation's best mental health programs."

Another pressing need, unmentioned by the commission, is for a national database of individuals with severe mental illness who also have a history of dangerous behavior. Law enforcement personnel have become de facto frontline mental health workers in most communities and yet often must respond to situations in which they have no information on an individual's mental status or dangerousness. Tragedy often ensues.

Finally, Congress should require that the National Institute of Mental Health dramatically increase the proportion of its funds (currently, about 28 percent) spent on research into the causes and treatment of mental illnesses. The failure of NIMH to support this kind of nuts-and-bolts research sufficiently for the past two decades in favor of studies on music aesthetics, public health, bird brains, and innumerable other trendy projects has reduced the number of effective new treatments available to schizophrenics and manic-depressives.

For a president committed to "compassionate conservatism," there could be no better demonstration project than transforming the mental health system along these lines, which would go far toward rescuing the most desperate of our homeless population. Too bad his commission, for the most part anyway, didn't see the opportunity. ■

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Scoring on *Sex and the City*

Kay S. Hymowitz

Sex and the City has a lot of sex and a lot of city, but it is the latter that ultimately provides more gratification. New York has been said to be the fifth character on the wildly popular HBO series, now in the midst of its sixth and final season, and she is if anything more beautiful, more stylish, and more infinitely various than the four exceptional specimens who play the leading human roles. The glittering metropolis this show depicts is as far removed from the gritty Gotham of earlier television shows like *Taxi* or *NYPD Blue* as Wal-Mart is from Bendel's.

Of course, the reason the city is so alluring on *Sex and the City* is that the setting is not just New York, but A-list New York. This upscale realm is embodied in the show's opening shots of Fifth Avenue and the elegantly urbane Chrysler Building, by the see-and-be-seen mahogany and chrome bars and restaurants, by the Chanel skirts and $400 strappy sandals, but most of all by the women's interesting—or what the series might half-mockingly call "fabulous"—careers. Unlike the largely "kept" women of Candace Bushnell's original newspaper columns on which the series is based, the four major characters of *Sex and the City* are successful competitors in the new knowledge economy.

In fact, it's a safe bet that they are the most well-educated and well-employed sitcom characters in TV history. The Smith-educated Charlotte, at least until she marries a doctor in the show's fourth season, manages an art gallery. Miranda, with a Harvard law degree, is a partner in a corporate law firm. Samantha has her own public-relations consulting business. And of course, Carrie, the Virgil whose voice-over guides the viewer through this comic purgatory, is a magazine columnist.

For *Sex and the City* presents single life—even in the midst of a glamorous New York and even at these relatively high career altitudes—as a kind of purgatory. Caught between adolescence and middle age, renting and owning, freedom from attachment and future husbands and children, the thirtysomething women of the series navigate an urban landscape thick with perplexing and perhaps chimerical images of the satisfying life. They want success in work, which they seem to have achieved; they want success in love, which continually eludes them. What makes the show infinitely more intriguing than ordinary television fare—along with the sharpness of its observation and wittiness of its writing—is that it hints that these romantic discontents are inherent in the meritocratic culture in which our heroines are succeeding so well.

Sex and the City unfolds in an elite New York that Edith Wharton or Nelson Rockefeller wouldn't recognize. In this city, merit, not pedigree, rules. Unlike the old Knickerbocker establishment, where birth and breeding gave social standing, in this democratic meritocracy it is the prestige of your job that tells us where you are in the social order. On *Sex and the City*, the first thing we learn about almost every new character is his or her profession, and the list could make up a social register of the knowledge economy: "a broker who made two million on bonds last year," a litigator "who takes steam baths with Ronald Perelman," a Harvard MBA, a publishing magnate, an architect, a documentary filmmaker, a composer of movie music, an actor, a labor lawyer, a divorce lawyer, a dermatologist, an ophthalmologist, an orthopedic surgeon, and an internist—and, of course, a full range of writers, the most creative of the brainy elite in this center of world journalism: "an editor at a hip political magazine," a writer for *The Economist*, and a "short-story writer."

Important as they are, jobs are not the only word on status for the newly arrived. Don't forget clothes: *Sex and the City* is a Yellow Pages of Manhattan's status fashion objects—Prada skirts, Richard Tyler dresses, DKNY jeans, Dolce and Gabbana tops, Fendi, Gucci, or Hermès bags, Cartier watches, Chanel earrings, and of course, Manolo Blahnik and Jimmy Choo shoes. The heroines lust after these pricey and *au courant* accoutrements of success, by

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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which they distinguish themselves from the flops who wear the cheap, the tacky, or the dowdy. They size up men with a similarly calculating eye for surfaces. Even in the post-liberation era, after all, female meritocrats want men with money.

And therein lies the rub. In a meritocratic economy, there is a disconnect between what makes people successful in work and what makes them successful in love. At the most practical level, ambitious meritocrats work grueling hours, and they're certainly too busy creating opportunities for themselves to take much time for the chivalrous arts. What's more, making it to the upper reaches of the knowledge economy requires mobility and independence. On *Sex and the City*, the more successful the man, the more stubbornly self-sufficient—and disloyal—he is. Men who have made it to the meritocratic heights, the show seems to imply, do so by keeping themselves free of confining obligations, and perpetually open to new prospects, whether financial or sexual.

Exhibit A is Mr. Big, *Sex and the City*'s closest thing to a Master of the new-economy Universe. Throughout the series, Carrie carries a torch for the smoothly elegant, rich, and powerful businessman, but he is a man who "won't commit." Carrie wants some sign from him that she is more than an overnight visitor—space in his closet or his medicine cabinet, an "I love you"—but the big man on the move has to be cautious about personal entanglements. "This isn't about us. This is about work," he tells her when they argue over his plans to move abroad temporarily. "I have to be in a relationship where, if I have to go to Paris, I go to Paris." If Big remains aloof from Carrie, it is not because he isn't immensely attracted to her, but because self-sufficiency is a *sine qua non* of his success. "Do you ever feel lonely?" Carrie asks plaintively in the fourth season, when he is preparing to move to the Napa Valley, where he has purchased a winery. "No," he answers without missing a beat.

At the less lofty rungs of the status ladder, ambitious meritocrats are no less self-involved than Mr. Big; they're just less polished about it. *Sex and the City* presents a rogues' gallery of high-achieving louts full of I-need-it-yesterday! self-centeredness. New York is the perfect arena for the demanding impatience of this new-economy striver. Not only does he have a chance to test himself against the best and the brightest, he gets to live in what Carrie calls "a place you can get anything, anytime." In season four, Samantha meets a man at an engagement party who snarls, "I told [the waiter] I wanted a Grey Goose on the rocks a fuckin' hour ago! Chop, chop!" Never one to be put off by a testosterone-pumped male, Samantha, the randiest of the foursome, purrs, "Well, Phil, and what do you do?" "I'm a TV agent, and I fuckin' love it!" barks the twitchy agent, a man whose loud-mouthed egotism is far better suited for success in wheeling and dealing than in cooing sweet nothings.

The TV agent, like many of the eligible knowledge-economy bachelors on the show, may have gone to Yale or Princeton, but he sure never got around to taking Manners 101. Charlotte dates a handsome agent who compulsively touches his private parts. One of Miranda's suitors, deficient in basic bathroom hygiene, leaves "skid marks" on his underwear; another, a cartoonist for *The New Yorker*, leaves the door open when using the facilities in her apartment. *Sex and the City* contrasts the poor breeding of arrivistes like these with the old-money gallantry of men like Trey MacDougal, the Park Avenue WASP Brahmin who becomes Charlotte's first husband. During their brief marriage, Trey, though handsome and virile in appearance, is a sexual disaster. Shortly after they have separated, Trey is thrilled when Charlotte comes to visit him, and in his ardor, he ejaculates on her dress. "I'm sorry, Charlotte," Trey says with as much dignity as a man could muster under the circumstances. "May I get you a hankie?" "Trey may have had a lot of flaws," Carrie says dryly in her voice-over, "but bad manners wasn't one of them."

The coarse manners of some of the high-achievers on the series are not simply an aesthetic problem; they signal an intense egotism incompatible with real attachment. While Trey suffers

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from Victorian-era sexual inhibitions that are a reflection of his aristocratic breeding, the show's meritocrats, by contrast, favor perversions that epitomize their ill-mannered narcissism. "There aren't any rules anymore," Carrie says, "the choices are endless. And apparently they can all be delivered." She's not just talking about egg rolls. Coming of age in an atmosphere of post-liberation license and devoted to their own naked self-interest, the Wall Street honchos, the high-powered agents, and the fashionable writers on *Sex and the City* tend to be far more infatuated with their private fantasies than with the real women they take to their beds.

Samantha meets up with a Harvard MBA who opens up his closet to reveal a richly appointed torture chamber. Carrie has a hot affair with a rising politician—until he presses her for "water sports." Miranda is briefly involved with a guy who only has sex in places where he can be caught and another who wants her to lick his anus. The narcissism of the pervert, who is interested in sex only as extreme sensation nurtured in solitary fantasy, is best illustrated by a vulgar movie star Charlotte takes up with in season three. At a bar and in front of a group of friends, he asks her to stick her fingers inside herself so he can smell them. His noxious and dictatorial self-absorption finds its perfect illustration in the way he calls Charlotte "Charlene." When she corrects him, he answers matter-of-factly, "I prefer Charlene."

Making it harder still to find a good man in a meritocratic age is the way success in the Big Apple tends to confound sexual identity. The upper reaches of the knowledge economy exist in a feminized metropolis of air kissing, clever comebacks, aesthetic discrimination, and prissy cuisine. It is the ideal ecosystem for women, homosexuals, and what Carrie and company call "gay straight men" (sometimes known as "metrosexuals")—men who, though they want $40 creams on their face and high fashion in their closets, still prefer females in their beds. (This summer's popular series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, in which a group of gay men help a series of straight slobs dress and decorate their apartments fashionably, mocks the old-fashioned male who is so out of his element in the style-obsessed city.)

Chris Noth, the actor who plays the vaguely metrosexual Mr. Big—smooth, elegant, and witty—certainly understands the problem: he once complained in *Entertainment Weekly* that, while his character was sipping white wine with the waifishly feminine Carrie, "Tony Soprano's out there killing people . . . and you feel like such a wuss." In the out-of-it loserdom of New Jersey, powerful men whack each other and then chow down with some pasta fazul; in where-it's-happening New York City, they do deals on paper over Sauvignon Blanc and mesclun.

The problem is that the metrosexual scene intensifies sexual ambiguities that discriminating women find unappealing. In season two, Charlotte, reeling from her latest "Neanderthal" date, spends an evening with an effeminate 35-year-old pastry chef from Chelsea, who she understandably assumes is gay. "It's so refreshing to go out with a man I can actually talk to," she gushes, as they chat about Cynthia Rowley dresses and cabaret singers. She is pleasantly surprised to learn that he is not only a heterosexual, but a proficient one at that. She is less pleased when he jumps up on a stool screaming after spotting a mouse in his kitchen. Willing to accept that real men eat quiche but not that they squeal at mice, Charlotte retreats to Neanderthal country.

Even the anything-goes Samantha is taken aback by men who too eagerly embrace their inner female. Close observers of the show have noted that the promiscuous and emotion-free Samantha seems the fantasy female of some of the show's gay male writers—a Kim Novak transformed into bathhouse cruiser. As if to mock that idea, Samantha runs into a hockey player she once slept with, who has taken to wearing a blond wig, weapons-grade mascara, and décolleté dresses—and who has renamed himself Samantha, in tribute to his "role model." "I am so much prettier than him," the real Samantha pouts uncomfortably, for even so battle-tested a sexual warrior as she is flummoxed by this walking example of the chaos of sexual identity in elite, post-liberation Manhattan.

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Still, for all the shortcomings of the male species on *Sex and the City*, the show is too smart to blame the romantic miseries of elite New York on testosterone imbalance. The truth is, the "fabulous" heroines of the show have also sold a piece of their souls to the devil of the meritocratic economy, becoming self-involved, demanding, and status-obsessed in ways that lead to chronic romantic disappointment.

In fact, the modern female careerists of *Sex and the City* are every bit as prone to romance-defeating egotism as their male counterparts. The sweet-natured Skipper, a website designer who is Carrie's male friend, asks a woman he has been dating why she no longer wants to see him. "We want different things in life," she explains. No, he answers, "We want the same thing. We both want to spend more time with you."

Many fans celebrate *Sex and the City* for showing fully liberated women acting on their sexual desires without guilt or inhibition. But their enthusiasm for sexual freedom has blinded them to the fact that our heroines, as egotistical and absorbed with their own pleasure as any man, often treat their sexual partners as contractors in a temporary business deal. If the guy can't complete the job with 100 percent customer satisfaction, then cancel his contract, no matter how kind he is. Miranda dumps a generous and thoughtful ophthalmologist because he cannot bring her to orgasm. Samantha drops the loving James because his penis is so small it's like a "gherkin," and she flees a doting sugar daddy because he has a "saggy" posterior. Even the more openhearted Charlotte is ready to ditch a restaurant critic because she is repulsed by his uncircumcised penis. "There was so much skin," she grimaces. "It was like a shar-pei."

With the exception of Charlotte, the *Sex and the City* heroines are also resolutely self-sufficient, a quality epitomized by their complete indifference to all things domestic. Nesting and cooking are associated with obligations, stability, and nurturing—all of them a drag on the fast-and-loose mobility required of ambitious careerists like Carrie, Miranda, and Samantha. Carrie spends tens of thousands of dollars on shoes (made for walking, as the song says) instead of saving to buy an apartment. Her higher-salaried friends have enough money to acquire the household symbols of upward mobility; the *Sex and the City* website points out that Samantha has a "Viking Stove and Gemini Sink." But the website is quick to assure us that her kitchen "looks very handsome, but . . . also looks brand new. We wanted to make it pretty obvious that Sam is not a domestic goddess by any means." Miranda's apartment also has "top of the line appliances," but, as a partner in a law firm, "she's too busy to cook." In this last season, when she comes home to see that her newest lover has set the table for a dinner he has cooked for her—with the exception of Charlotte, only men cook on the show—she asks only half-seriously, "Omigod! I have *place mats*?"

Samantha, the PR consultant, is the show's most comical and extreme example of the striver's lack of regard for stability and deep connection. She is voracious, snooty, and as shallow as a reflecting pool, perfect qualities for her image-focused career. In one episode in the fourth season, Samantha introduces herself to the man she has dubbed "Friar Fuck," a sensuous-looking Franciscan priest. Explaining his vows of poverty and chastity to the uncomprehending Samantha, he hands her a prayer card depicting his patron saint, adding that it shows "Saint Francis giving his coat to the poor." Samantha, resplendent in a chic fur, takes the card and, just as she would if this were a hookup at Balthazar, hands him her business card in return. "Samantha Jones. Public relations," she purrs, batting her eyes. Liberated from all prohibitions and commitments, Samantha can't begin to imagine a life devoted to pursuing anything higher than narcissistic pleasures. "I like to believe people have more than one soul mate," Carrie muses in one of the girls' endless discussions of why they don't seem able to find true love. "I agree," Samantha instantly concurs. "I've had hundreds."

Yet for all her promiscuity, Samantha, like most people on the make, is also a terrible snob. "I don't do boroughs," Samantha sniffs, when her latest boy toy

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asks her to come see him in a theater production in Brooklyn. Though Samantha is happy to hook up with her inferiors—including a fireman (series co-producer Michael Patrick King said he wrote the character, inevitably, given his déclassé career, as "a dumb fireman"), a wrestling coach, and her office assistant—that is because they mean nothing to her. Only the hotel tycoon Richard Wright, who has a private plane and buys her expensive gifts—and who, like her, keeps his business and romantic options open—manages to touch, and to break, her silly heart.

Samantha is hardly the only one of the fabulous four partial to alpha males. Carrie and company would like to pretend that a new day has dawned and that successful women who have their own corner offices or newspaper columns don't need to worry about what kind of money their lovers earn. They delude themselves. In one especially clever episode entitled "The Caste System," the girls, who are lined up having pedicures, all object when Charlotte insists that "it's normal for the guy to make more money" and points out that Miranda's current boyfriend is "working-class." The women are offended. "It's the millennium, sweetie," Carrie preens. "We don't say things like 'working-class' anymore." But, as the girls realize as they look down in comic unison at the faceless salon workers cleaning the dirt out of their fabulous toenails, in this case it is the perennially naive Charlotte who is the realist. Class matters as much to the successful new-millennium woman as it did to Jane Austen, and each of the women's stories testifies to that fact.

Charlotte, though she may know a working-class stiff when she sees one, still has a lot to learn about the changing nature of the social hierarchy in the information age, and her two marriages give her a full education. An old-line WASP, more Ralph Lauren than Dolce and Gabbana—she had her own horse as a girl and went to Smith (which the writers seem to remember from its Seven Sisters period)—she quite naturally is first drawn to Trey MacDougal. Though he is not simply a trust-fund baby but a doctor at a Manhattan hospital, his identity is far more wrapped up in his pedigree than in his profession. With his plaid-curtained and duck decoy–accented Park Avenue apartment, he is the old establishment personified.

By contrast, Harry Goldenblatt, Charlotte's second husband, seems another breed entirely. No preppie prince, Harry is bald and a little coarse, a quality emphasized by his grossly hairy back. But Harry's Jewish lineage, thriving law practice, and house in Bridgehampton all bespeak self-made and upwardly mobile brainiess and ballsiness that make him suitable husband material, unlike Trey, whose frequent bouts of impotence seem inseparable from his repressed WASP blandness. On the surface, the writers are making the point that Charlotte must learn that life cannot match her conventional *Town and Country* dreams, that love sometimes comes in unexpected and even hirsute packages. What Charlotte has really come to understand is that success no longer dwells in the Connecticut estates of the MacDougals of this world, but in the 24/7 offices of the meritocrat, who is just as likely to be the son of an immigrant as a prep school grad. "My marriage is a fake Fendi," Charlotte had moaned when she was married to the limp Trey. With Harry, she has herself a real Fendi, self-made, potent, and while not handsome, as solid and flashy as a roll of crisp, new $100 bills.

Carrie's struggle to unravel the mysteries of love and status in the new information age is even more fraught than Charlotte's, largely because she is more ambitious and more successful than her Smithie friend. Carrie has climbed her way into the heights of the New York knowledge economy. "I knew Carrie when she took the subway and wore Candies," Carrie's gay friend Stanford Blatch crows; but now, though she lives in a rent-controlled apartment and has to haggle over per-word payments from fashion magazines, Carrie takes taxis (and sometimes limos) and wears Jimmy Choo shoes. Her articles are optioned for a book; her book is optioned for a movie. She may not have a

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husband, but she has consummated a storybook career; in the fifth season, she celebrates the moment "even the most cynical New York woman dreams of her entire life"—the day of "a girl's book party."

But Carrie's fairy-tale success severely compromises her ability to love. As played by the endearing Sarah Jessica Parker, Carrie may appear to be thoughtful, warm, and open-hearted, but at bottom she is still an alpha-male huntress. Carrie's relationship with Aidan, "the perfect boyfriend," was always destined to collapse. Aidan seems loving and generous—when they break up the second time, he tries to get her to keep the engagement ring he gave her—but there is no getting past the fact that he is a furniture maker, who not only handles tools but who loves sports, beer, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. In a metrosexual city, such habits cast suspicion on his status; he could be a guy from the outer boroughs, or worse—what Candace Bushnell calls a "loser . . . from New Jersey."

His profession symbolizes a kind of earthy domesticity that is entirely out of place in the higher reaches of making-it New York. Carrie wants to go to a *Gab* magazine launch party or a trendy gay nightclub or Bungalow 8, a club so exclusive "you need a key to get in." But Aidan, who may be happy to sell his artisan wares to the wealthy elite, is otherwise unimpressed by in-places and beautiful people. ("Why do you buy into that shit?" he mutters at one point, with a trace of Birkenstock-style self-complacency.) Carrie breaks out in hives when she tries on a bridal gown and moans, "I'm missing the bride gene," but the truth is, it's not her. It's Aidan.

At least until the show's finale, only Mr. Big—the show doesn't emphasize his exact business but we know he is no furniture maker—fully captures Carrie's heart. Big is rich, and his wealth is at the heart of his masculine appeal. He travels in a limousine, in sumptuous suits and immaculately ironed white shirts. ("Cabs are bullshit," Big grumbles when he is forced to travel in one with Carrie.) Big understands Carrie's vulnerability when it comes to Aidan; calling him Paul Bunyan and Daniel Boone, he sneers: "I can smell the guy on your sheets. Wood chips and Paco Rabanne"—a cheap men's cologne.

Big's wealth makes it possible for him to make the grand gesture that Carrie, sweet and loving as she can be, is shallow enough to confuse with manliness. When he gives $400 to the driver of a horse-drawn carriage to take Carrie to the hospital fast when Miranda goes into labor, it would be hard for any girl to resist. Indeed, in *Sex and the City* chat rooms, fans moan for the series' writers to bring Carrie and Big together at the end of the final season: "Give us an ending that gives us renewed faith in the concept of soul mates . . . that happy endings exist with intelligent, exciting men. . . . This is a chance to send a message to an entire generation of women that you don't have to settle." They know that as a true alpha, Big is Carrie's equal.

But according to the *New York Times*, the writers are aiming even higher than the generically successful businessman for Carrie: our heroine, who this season reached such heights that she got to ring the opening bell at the Stock Exchange, lands an "international artist," to be played by Mikhail Baryshnikov, who, according to Sarah Jessica Parker, "has such presence that Carrie gets bigger too." In the meritocracy's Darwinian marital struggle, a super achiever like Carrie deserves more than Big; she deserves Bigger.

Ironically, it is only Miranda, the most openly workaholic and ambitious of the four, who rebels at the confines of the meritocratic society and its stringent status demands. True, Miranda has often seemed willing to let success trump all other primal feelings; as Carrie quips after she breaks up with a boyfriend around the same time the lawyer finally receives a promotion: "That night Miranda lost a partner. The next day she gained 15 of them." But Miranda has longings that she knows will never be satisfied by law partners, even 15 of them.

In season four, Miranda becomes pregnant after a sentimental one-night stand with her ex-boyfriend, Steve, and at the last minute decides not to go through with a scheduled abortion. Nearing 35 and diagnosed

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with "a lazy ovary," she realizes this pregnancy could be her last chance to have a baby. Exhausted and falling asleep at her desk at her law firm, Miranda wakes up to learn that colleagues are whispering about her. Is she an alcoholic? Is she bipolar? Miranda becomes furious when an officemate who has learned of her condition tells everyone that she is tired because she is having a baby. Isn't it better that they think she is pregnant than that she is an alcoholic or a manic-depressive, he asks? "No," Miranda answers curtly. "Not in a law firm." Miranda knows that the contemporary office is a jealous lover and cannot tolerate the sort of divided loyalties that come with babies. Before finding herself pregnant, she probably shared her profession's preference for a mental illness over baby hunger. After all, the former could be curable.

But it is Miranda's erratic relationship with Steve that best dramatizes her struggles with the status rules of elite New York. Steve is as lovable as they come: he massages Miranda's feet and he phones her at 2 AM to insist she look at a full moon. The relationship is faced with one serious problem: Steve is a bartender, and he lives in an apartment that he quips is "modeled after DeNiro's place in *Taxi Driver*." He breaks off with Miranda when he realizes he cannot afford the $1,800 suit she chooses for him for an evening event at her firm.

She claims not to care about their income disequilibrium, but later events suggest she's not as free from snobbery as she thinks. In an episode in season three, Miranda is horrified to learn that a man she has been having an affair with is not the high-powered ER doctor he claimed to be, but rather the manager of the "Athlete's Foot at 81st and Broadway," an unforgivable, downwardly mobile lie. In a minor but quirkily funny incident that season, the corporate lawyer momentarily fantasizes about a man hidden inside a sandwich costume advertising a local eatery. When she finally comes to her senses, as Carrie muses with a nice touch of absurdist irony, it is because she realizes, "She was a lawyer, and he was a sandwich."

As the series approaches its finale, Miranda's intensifying mating/status dilemma may be reaching an unexpected resolution. At the beginning of the sixth season, Miranda meets a new boyfriend, Robert Leeds. Robert is African American, a fact that in the logic of the meritocracy earns no comment on the show. That is not the case with Robert's profession. We hear repeatedly that Robert is a doctor for the Knicks, a niche that cleverly marries the stable income of medicine with the glitz of entertainment. Steve, now the father of Miranda's baby, also has a new girlfriend. Her name is Debby, and, he announces proudly, she "works for MasterCard, corporate headquarters"—a job that marks her as lower or middle management, outer-borough, a loser in the knowledge-economy race. On hearing about all this, Samantha exclaims over lunch: "You win!" and Miranda admits to feeling some satisfaction at the fact that her trophy doctor looks a lot more impressive than Steve's working girl.

But more than any other character on the series, Miranda is too smart, in the emotional as well as the academic sense, to give in to feelings like this. In the last episode of the fall season, she tells Steve that she is still in love with him and reunites with the father of her baby. Could it be that the least superficial of the fabulous women on *Sex and the City* will also be the only one to end the series married, with children? Is it possible that in her new guise she will even make use of her untouched "top of the line appliances"?

Sex and the City is not always completely sincere about the dark side of making it in the age of the meritocracy. The show never admits that the psychic qualities that compromise its characters' capacity for romance also might interfere with their loyalty toward—not to mention their time for—their friends. Even after Miranda has her baby, and even though she is partner in a corporate law firm, she has the free hours and the energy for regular gossipy lunches with her friends; her leisure must get a good laugh from viewers who are working mothers. The show also pretends that girlfriends can satisfy your need for a family, should you not find a suitable

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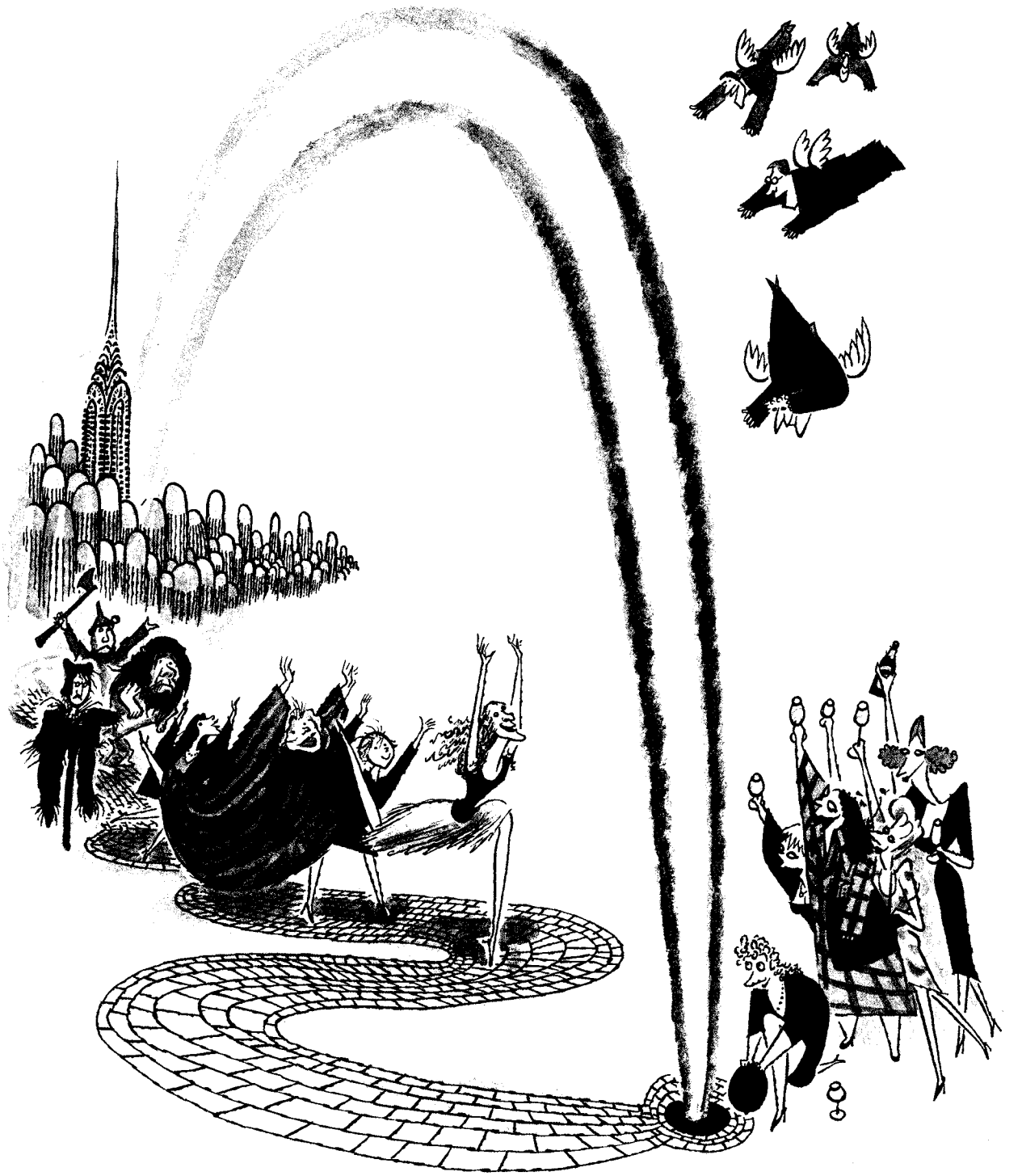

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husband. Our girls rarely fight, they are never envious, and, most unlikely of all, they just about never put their boyfriends—or husbands and babies—first. We used to tell fairy tales about happily-ever-after marriages; today, it seems, we tell myths about happily-ever-after girlfriends.

But despite the writers' own flirtation with comforting myth, the threat of loneliness that inevitably bedevils the ambitious and mobile free agent looms like winter on a rainy autumn day in Central Park on *Sex and the City*. In season three, Samantha gets the flu and goes through her black book to find a man who will help her put up a curtain rod in her new apartment so she can close the curtains and get some sleep. No one will come to her aid, and the proud career warrior, in her moment of weakness, blubbers: "Carrie, if you don't have a guy who cares about you, you don't have anything. . . . We're all alone, Carrie."

Of course, Samantha wouldn't be Samantha if she did not later claim to have been "delirious" from her fever. But her friends don't have the same armor. "I'm scared," Carrie says, facing her 35th birthday after breaking up with Aidan. Charlotte, who has herself recently divorced Trey, responds, "I know. Me too." "Alone again," nods Carrie.

Of course, that was before Carrie met her Prince Charming in the form of an international artist. *Sex and the City* may be smart as a Stanford-educated entrepreneur, but it's still television

Richard Rodgers: Enigma Variations

Stefan Kanfer

Based on current performances and record sales, the world's most popular songs aren't those of Schubert or Schumann, John Lennon or the latest hip-hop artist. They come courtesy of a gentleman of formal manner and formidable talent who took Broadway by storm more than half a century ago. Since the stage is an arena that the young rarely visit these days, the songs of Richard Rodgers (1902–1979) should have become mere antiques long ago, appreciated by connoisseurs but remote from contemporary taste. And yet Rodgers's works still find millions of listeners of every age and in almost every land. Over the past decade, six of his musicals have received opulent Broadway revivals, and two have enjoyed television re-staging.

Why do Rodgers's tunes still enchant? Of course, there's the man's gift for melodic invention: had he set the Lands' End catalog to music, the results still would have made the Hit Parade. His music also has lasted because he was lucky enough to find just the right collaborators at key points in his career. But then, as composer Hector Berlioz once noted, it isn't enough to have talent to succeed; nor is luck alone sufficient: one has to have the talent

MGM/THE KOBAL COLLECTION

Babes in Arms

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Urbanities

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THE GRANGER COLLECTION

Richard Rodgers (left) and Lorenz Hart in 1927

for luck. This Rodgers possessed in overplus.

The second son of headstrong physician William Rodgers (born William Abraham) and his well-to-do wife, Mamie (née Levy), Richard Charles Rodgers grew up on Manhattan's West Side in what to outsiders seemed a placid upper-middle-class home. But in later years, Richard's daughters recalled a darker scene. "I didn't get good feelings about family life," said Linda Rodgers. "I heard more comments about the difficult relationships and the silences that went on at meals. . . . [G]randfather would often storm out." Agreed elder sister Mary, "I think my father grew up with a lot of fear and anxiety."

Rodgers was too complex a man to have a "Rosebud"—a single childhood incident that illuminates all that follows. But one disturbing episode does stand out. One night, the eight-year-old Richard awoke in excruciating pain, his right index finger swollen almost wrist-size. The boy had contracted osteomyelitis, an infection of the bone marrow. He lay in agony until his parents returned from a night out. When they inspected him, Rodgers remembered, "Pop simply got a scalpel from his office and had Mom hold me while he made one terrifying slash in the finger to allow the pus to escape." He faced

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the same procedure repeatedly until cured. "Local anesthetic was seldom used in those days, so what followed were eight months of torture to a small boy by well-meaning men," he bitterly recalled. Rodgers wondered if his lifelong hypochondria resulted from the memory of his father "suddenly appearing in the middle of the night to cut me savagely with a knife."

It was during his recuperation that Rodgers's love for music blossomed. He would listen, beguiled, as his mother played popular songs and operettas on the parlor Steinway. By age nine, the little boy with a grownup face was attending Saturday music matinees by himself. Returning home, he would sit at that same family keyboard, picking out by ear the tunes he had heard. Soon, he was inventing astonishingly mature melodies of his own. Serious piano lessons and attendance at classical concerts and operas followed.

Yet if little Richard loved classical music, he also sensed, even in those early days, that his destiny lay a bit north of the old Metropolitan Opera House. Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and other audacious tunesmiths were taking American popular music in exciting new directions. Rodgers longed to join their company.

William Rodgers wasn't amused by his son's musical ambitions. After all, the good doctor's elder son Morty was already a pre-med at Columbia, and the assumption was that Richard would follow in his brother's slipstream. It would not do to have a Rodgers slumming in show business. Tensions mounted. A family friend recalled a telling recital at the family's Long Island summer home. Richard was joyously playing the piano when the doctor's car crunched driveway gravel. "Dick, dear," Mama whispered, "here comes your Dad, so get away from the piano." Dick retreated on that occasion, but remained glued to the keyboard when his father wasn't around.

Young Rodgers invented melodies on that keyboard, not words: to realize his ambitions, he needed a lyricist. Boy, did he find one! The 16-year-old had heard about a swarthy, gnome-like Columbia graduate, Lorenz "Larry" Hart, who had built a reputation as a light versifier. One of Morty's pals knew the writer and arranged a meeting.

Larry Hart was the child of well-to-do immigrants. His rotund, irrepressible father, Max, was part hustler, part promoter, forever launching companies that prospered and then faltered, whereupon he'd just start another one—always staying a jump ahead of the creditors. This was one of Max's flush periods: he had set up his family in a posh West 119th Street townhouse. But commerce held no appeal for Larry, who, at age 23, still lived at home, holed up in his cluttered room, spending his days translating German poetry and his nights drinking to excess.

Like Rodgers, Hart nourished dreams of glory—accomplishments in the theater that would win him fame and wealth. That's where the similarity ended, however. Rodgers had a muscular work ethic; music flowed out of him like conversation; he was handsome and, at least at this point, upbeat, attracted by—and attractive to—women. Hart was an undisciplined, unprepossessing man, whose furtive homosexual liaisons invariably ended in sorrow. Despite these differences, the young men hit it off: "I left Hart's house," Richard observed, "having acquired in one afternoon a career, a partner, a best friend and a source of permanent irritation."

The first Rodgers and Hart sessions were magic. One of the duo's earliest songs, "Any Old Place with You," even caught the attention of comedian/producer Lew Fields, who put it in his new musical, *A Lonely Romeo*, at the Rialto Theater. Rodgers and Hart would write far better material, but this number hinted at the remarkable oeuvre to come. Richard's tune simulated a driving locomotive; Larry's lyrics played with places to be visited:

From old Virginia
Or Abyssinia,
We'll go straight to Halifax.
I've got a mania
For Pennsylvania,
Even ride in London hacks.
I'll call each dude a pest
You like in Budapest,
Oh for far Peru!
I'll go to hell for ya,
Or Philadelphia,

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Urbanities

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COLUMBIA/THE KOBAL COLLECTION

Rita Hayworth, Frank Sinatra, and Kim Novak in the movie version of *Pal Joey*

Any old place with you.

Today, teenagers are big stars; back then, the only adolescents associated with the theater were ushers. The notion that a 17-year-old could have a song performed on Broadway was the stuff of headlines. Rodgers was beside himself, certain that he had entered the on-ramp to success. His timing, though, was off: the Rialto suffered from the citywide recession in the early 1920s, and after the team's winning debut, no significant offers came their way.

His career stalled, Rodgers unenthusiastically enrolled at Columbia, following his brother's pre-med path. But he never stopped writing music. Because of his brief Broadway triumph, Rodgers received invitations to pen tunes for varsity shows (several boasting lyrics by that promising law student Oscar Hammerstein II). Off campus, Rodgers continued to work with Hart. They scored a slew of amateur musicals, with arch titles like *A Danish Yankee at King Tut's Court* and *Temple Bells*.

Rodgers never regretted the years (1920 through 1924) he spent pounding out such amateur works. It was during this period, after all, that he convinced his father that two Dr. Rodgerses would be enough for one family. Worn down by his younger son's doggedness, William permitted Richard to transfer from Columbia to the Institute of Musical Art (now Juilliard). But even more crucial to Rodgers's songwriting future, his amateur efforts provided him with his real musical education. "There is a great deal more to writing for the musical theater than learning notation, the meaning of a diminished seventh, or banging away at a typewriter in some lonely room," he acknowledged. Later in life, he advised Broadway hopefuls: "to reject at the start the idea that 'amateur' is a dirty word. . . . [I]n the audience may be someone's uncle who knows an agent or a producer—or who may even be an agent or producer—and the amateur may have taken the first giant step toward becoming a professional."

Rodgers was speaking from his own early experience. To avoid relying on his father's largesse, which by 1924 had grown considerable, he was about to start a job as a traveling salesman, peddling children's undergarments for $50 a week, when an intriguing offer came in. Some folks at the Theater Guild had caught a few of those amateur nights and, believing the composer and his lyricist ready for prime time, asked them to come up with the score for a new Broadway revue, *The Garrick Gaities*.

Most of the numbers for that production are long forgotten, but a modest little duet became a city's anthem. The bright, catchy notes and

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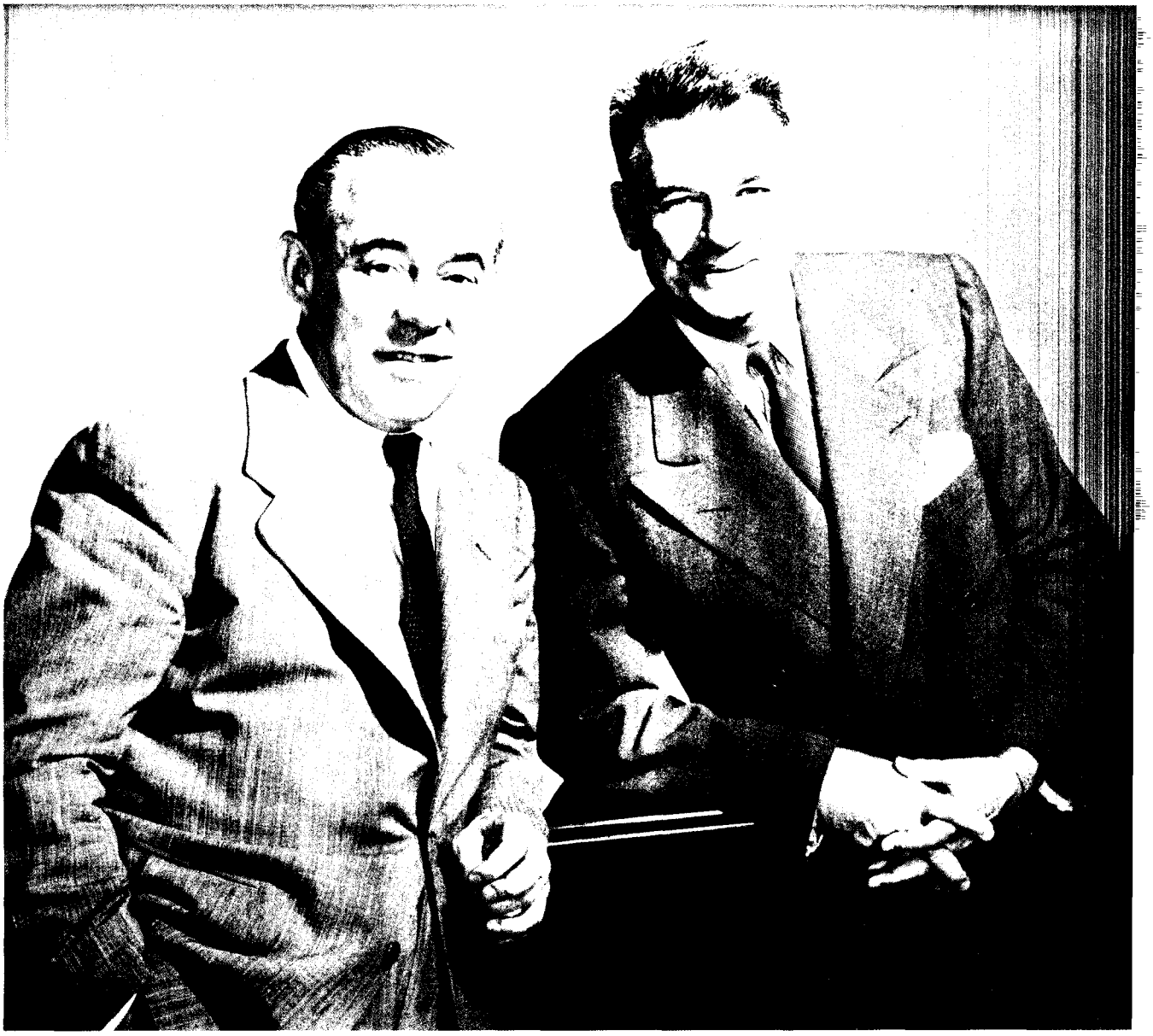

Richard Rodgers (left) teamed up with Oscar Hammerstein in 1942.

knowing internal rhymes heralded the arrival of a new and irresistible Broadway style. "If one song can be said to have 'made' Rodgers and Hart," wrote the melodist, "it was 'Manhattan.'"

We'll have Manhattan
The Bronx and Staten
Island too.
It's lovely strolling through
The zoo.
It's very fancy
On old Delancey
Street, you know
The subway charms us so
When balmy breezes blow
To and fro
And tell me what street
Compares with Mott Street
In July?
Sweet pushcarts gliding by.
The great big city's a wondrous toy
Just made for a girl and boy.
We'll turn Manhattan
Into an isle of joy.

The reviews sang. Critic Robert Benchley called *Gaities* "by miles the most civilized show in town." Rodgers and Hart's songs clicked "like a colonel's heels at attention," *Variety* enthused.

The team's next major musical, 1925's *Dear Enemy*, clicked louder and garnered even more attention. "Here in My Arms" stretched to an octave and a fifth in the nineteenth bar of its chorus. Even so, theater historian Gerald Boardman pointed out, the Rodgers tune somehow remained easy to sing, announcing "a departure from the tightly knit melodies of most musical comedy songs." Hart's contributions did not go unnoticed either: the rhyme of "radiant" with "lady aunt" in "I Beg Your Pardon" sent the *New York Sun*

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critic into transports of delight. For the rest of the decade, the duo flourished, scoring more than a dozen Broadway shows, some short-lived, others durable.

At first, the two men wrote simultaneously, but soon Hart's eccentric behavior disrupted the routine. Rodgers was Mr. Punctual. Hart turned out to be, in his partner's memorable phrase, "a fellow who says he'll be at your house with the lyric at 2:00, and shows up on Friday." By the end of the twenties, the melodies almost always came first, and Hart tardily fitted the words to them. But what words! What dazzling internal rhymes and verbal gymnastics!:

Beans could get no keener re-
Ception in a beanery
Bless our mountain greenery
Home
Both thine eyes are cute, too—
What they do to
Me.
Hear me holler
I choose a sweet
Lolla
Palooza
In thee.

Or:

Sometimes I think
I've found my hero
But it's a queer ro-
Mance.
All that you need is a ticket.
Come on, big boy, ten cents a dance!

The Rodgers and Hart relationship became increasingly symbiotic. Whatever Hart gave his partner in those early years, noted fellow composer Alec Wilder, prompted Rodgers's "greatest invention and pellucid freshness." And what Rodgers gave Hart, says theater critic John Lahr, was "something insistent and sincere that plays against Hart's own inveterate cynicism."

Still, that cynicism revealed itself in song after song. Hart could turn out rhymes about requited love when the occasion demanded—"With a Song in My Heart," for instance, or "The Blue Room." But his natural métier was disappointed romance and unfulfilled yearnings:

It is easy to see all right
Ev'rything's gonna be all right—
Be just dandy for ev'rybody but me.

I'm so hot and bothered that
I don't know
My elbow from my ear.
I suffer something awful
Each time you go
And much worse when you're near.

He was my one and all
He was my why and wherefore.

My moon and sun and all,
He is the man I care for!
And now my love song is through.
It was too good to be true.

With Rodgers and Hart ruling Broadway, Richard took on a different kind of partner. The daughter of a prominent New York lawyer, Dorothy Belle Feiner was both beautiful and wealthy. The self-made groom effortlessly treated his bride to a sojourn in England. "A honeymoon trip to Europe would be the least one could expect from a young husband with the income of a Richard Rodgers," observes biographer Meryle Secrest. "One family story has it that that when he got married at the age of 27, he was making $75,000 a year"—this in 1930, when the Depression was ravaging the country.

When Richard and Dorothy returned to Manhattan, she was pregnant, and he was preparing to head west with Hart: Paramount Studios had made the writers an offer they couldn't refuse. The Rodgers's first child, Mary, was born in 1931, and for the next four years, the young family split their time between Beverly Hills and New York, with Richard staying mostly in Hollywood away from the family, working on films that never seemed to get made.

But one outstanding movie did find its way to the screen. There had been nothing like *Love Me Tonight* before; there's been nothing like it since. The film's opening number, sung by Maurice Chevalier and a large cast, features Hart's characteristic rhymed couplets. As the Parisian day begins, Rodgers's melody is irresistible and everyone has his say in words or syllables that sweep viewers along:

TAXI DRIVER: *Isn't it romantic?*

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

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Da, da, da, da, da,
And now sir we are here.
COMPOSER: *How much do I owe you?*
Da, da, da, da, da
TAXI DRIVER: *Two francs.*
COMPOSER: *Oh, that's too dear!*

[Cut to train compartment.]
Isn't it romantic?
Da, da, da, da, da
I'll write some words as well.
Isn't it romantic
Sitting on the train?
This song has got to sell!
[French soldiers on the train listen as he writes.]
While bravely at the throttle sits the engineer!
1st SOLDIER: *Hey Henri, pass the bottle!*
2nd SOLDIER: *This is rotten beer!*
COMPOSER: *Isn't it romantic?*
Speeding right along
The outskirts of Paree!
SOLDIERS: *Isn't it romantic?*
Listen to that song!

1st SOLDIER: *It's too damn long for me!*
SOLDIERS: *Da, da, da, da, da, da, da!*
We would rather sing than fight for France!
Isn't it romance?

When he wasn't working with Hart on film scores, Rodgers, joined by Dorothy, attended innumerable Beverly Hills dinner parties, only to find that there was no escaping studio life. The routine proved as ritualized as a Noh play: the meal finished, the host—usually a film industry bigwig—would invite his guests into his living room. On his command, a wall would swing out, revealing a screen (without disturbing the Impressionist paintings). The dinner guests would then watch a forthcoming movie. "You never dared to express an opinion," Dorothy recalled, "because you never knew who was sitting next to you."

Love Me Tonight proved to be the pinnacle of Rodgers and Hart's cinematic career. They did some good film work for Al Jolson: *Hallelujah, I'm a Bum*, written in 1933, contained several outstanding songs, including "You Are Too Beautiful." And grinding out songs for MGM, they came up with "Easy to Remember," crooned by Bing Crosby in *Mississippi*. But for the most part, their efforts fizzled.

Hart ran into the most difficulty. Studio heads found the Rodgers melodies acceptable but frequently sent Hart back to rewrite his lyrics. On one occasion only, this rewriting worked in Hart's favor. "Prayer" employed a simple lyric, intended for a Jean Harlow turn in *Hollywood Party*:

Oh, Lord
If you ain't busy up there,
I ask for help with a prayer
So please don't give me the air.

Neither Harlow nor "Prayer" appeared in the picture. Rodgers and Hart then adapted the song as the title number for *Manhattan Melodrama*. This time it had a different rhyme scheme:

Act One:
You gulp your coffee and run;
Into the subway you crowd.
Don't breathe, it isn't allowed.

The song again didn't make the cut. But it reappeared with a third set of lyrics, and this time it *did* make it into *Manhattan Melodrama*. Retitled "The Bad in Every Man," the song became a showstopper for nightclub chanteuse Shirley Ross:

Oh, Lord . . . .
I could be good to a lover,
But then I always discover
The bad in ev'ry man.

Hollywood legend has it that Hart ran into MGM's music publisher Jack Robbins after the film opened. Robbins remained ambivalent about the song: "You know, Larry, that's a really good tune you boys have there. I'd be glad to get behind it, but it needs a commercial lyric." Replied Hart, "Oh, yeah, I suppose what you'd like me to write is something corny, like 'Blue Moon.'" Robbins nodded, and Hart, for the first and last time, rewrote the song to please an executive:

Blue moon
You saw me standing alone,
Without a dream in my heart,
Without a love of my own.

"Blue Moon" became a phenomenal seller. But their

Mary Martin in *South Pacific*

PHOTOFEST

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Hollywood hit song proved Rodgers and Hart's Hollywood swan song. Weary and disappointed, the men bought one-way tickets back to New York. Historian Ethan Mordden notes that cinema "wasn't a good form for them—though Hart had a terrific time. He loved the nightlife. He never really was much for working." As for Rodgers, he "so loved the theater he felt very fish out of water."

As the team waited out the final weeks of their contract, Richard wrote Dorothy about a worrying development. "I've experienced something I've never known before," he explained. "I have an active and intense feeling of depression which is absolutely impossible to shake off." One trigger for his black mood might well have been a *Los Angeles Examiner* column: "Whatever happened to Rodgers and Hart?" And then there was the farewell with Irving Thalberg. Wanting to thank the MGM production chief, who had first enticed him to Hollywood, Rodgers drove to the mogul's office, waited for a long stretch, and then was shown in. "Thalberg looked up with an uncomprehending, glassy look on his boyish face," the composer later wrote, "and I suddenly realized he hadn't the faintest idea who I was." Concluded Rodgers: "The studio might have lulled us into staying out there longer. But that would have been the end of Larry Hart and Dick Rodgers. I'm sure I would have ended up as a neurotic, a drunkard, or both." Tragically, he would wind up as both in his beloved New York.

Back in Gotham, he battled depression for about a year, while he and Hart searched for the right vehicle to show audiences they were back in town. They found it in *Jumbo*, impresario Billy Rose's extravaganza. Staged in the mammoth New York Hippodrome, the musical, built around a circus, starred Jimmy Durante as a comic schemer stealing a pachyderm—until the cops catch him in the act. Thereupon, he uttered the year's most famous line: "*What* elephant?" With *Jumbo*, Rodgers quietly established himself as America's Waltz King, with "Over and Over Again" and "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World," displacing the Strausses, who had ruled the genre with their cloying hint of *Sacher torte mit schlag*. Rodgers injected an American verve and comic bounce, and music in 3/4 time would never be the same.

The show was the smash of 1935—the year Rodgers became a father again, of another daughter, Linda. He promised reporters that R & H would soon break new ground. He was right. Opening in April, 1937, *Babes in Arms* made stars of complete unknowns—and featured some of Rodgers and Hart's most charming, sophisticated songs: "Where or When," "My Funny Valentine," "The Lady Is a Tramp," and "I Wish I Were in Love Again," with Hart's inimitable cascade:

The furtive sigh,
The blackened eye,
The words, "I'll love you 'til the day I die,"
The self-deception that believes the lie—
I wish I were in love again.
When love congeals
It soon reveals
The faint aroma of performing seals,
The double-crossing of a pair of heels.
I wish I were in love again!

In November of that year came *I'd Rather Be Right*. Starring George M. Cohan, this production audaciously satirized Franklin D. Roosevelt, the most popular president in American history. The following season R & H presented *The Boys from Syracuse* (with the great waltz, "Falling in Love with Love"), the first Broadway musical based on Shakespearean comedy.

Hart hit the bottle so hard that he proved difficult to work with—when he didn't just up and disappear. With a deadline looming, Rodgers persuaded his partner to check into Doctors Hospital—and moved in with him, notebooks, piano, and all, so that they could compose while Larry dried out. The cure worked well enough to get the work done.

Then Hart backslid: he failed to appear at meetings, ignored his personal appearance, struggled with rhymes that once came effortlessly. There were still triumphs, like *Too Many Girls*, starring an unknown named Desi Arnaz, and *Pal Joey*, the first musical that dared to

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have an antihero, a heel played by Gene Kelly. By 1940, however, the partnership was in deep trouble.

Rodgers began to consider writing with another lyricist. Oscar Hammerstein II was the logical choice. The scion of a theatrical family—his uncle a noted Broadway producer and his father the Victoria Theater's manager—Hammerstein had written important shows with Vincent Youmans, Rudolf Friml, Sigmund Romberg, and Jerome Kern. But his last hit had been *Showboat*, way back in 1927. After a string of flops, he desperately sought the right collaborator. He and Rodgers, though not close friends, had known each other since their college days; they respected each other's work and occasionally lunched together.

Rodgers set up a meeting with Hammerstein to talk about Lynn Riggs's play *Green Grow the Lilacs*. The Theater Guild had just bought the rights, and Rodgers thought a creative musician and lyricist team could. . . . Hammerstein didn't want to talk about it. Intrigued as he was, he warned, "It would kill Larry if you walked away while he was still able to function." Still, he added, "If the time ever comes when he cannot function, call me."

Alas, the time wasn't long in arriving. Larry expressed no interest in working on a "cowboy musical"—the adaptation of *Lilacs* that eventually became *Oklahoma!* Besides, he wanted to take a vacation in Mexico and then concentrate on a revival of *A Connecticut Yankee*, an old Rodgers and Hart chestnut. Though Richard grumbled privately that there ought to be "a statute of limitations on gratitude," he nevertheless ponied up $100,000 to produce *Yankee*: he thought he owed it to Larry. Then he went to work with Oscar on the cowboy musical.

The difference between Hart and Hammerstein was the difference between klieg light and daylight. Oscar was a devoted family man, knowledgeable about the America that lay beyond New York City, instantly accessible, disciplined by habit, and optimistic by nature ("I just can't write anything without hope in it," he noted). Research was as key to Hammerstein's method as inspiration. For one song, he originally wrote: "The corn is as high as a cow pony's eye." Then he strolled in a cornfield and found the stalks considerably higher. The cowpoke's folksy simile became "as high as an elephant's eye."

Hammerstein worked alone, at glacial pace, painstakingly fashioning phrases before submitting the whole lyric to the composer. Rodgers worried about his new partner's approach, until Hammerstein drove from his Doylestown, Pennsylvania, farmhouse to Richard's summer place in Fairfield, Connecticut, with the lyrics to "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" in hand. Rodgers scanned the opening line, "There's a bright golden haze on the meadow." "I was sick with joy," he recalled. "When you're given words like that you've got something to say musically. You'd really have to be made of cement not to spark to that." He came up with a melody ten minutes later. This fluency always astonished Hammerstein: "I work for two weeks on a lyric," he said, "and hours later Dick has done his half of the work."

Hammerstein exaggerated, though not by much. *Oklahoma!* took time to coalesce. But by mid-1943, it was ready to go, perfected even further by the work of choreographer Agnes DeMille. Rodgers had always liked the idea of big-name choreographers working with his music: in 1937, George Balanchine, fresh from the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, had staged the jazzy "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" for Rodgers and Hart's *On Your Toes*.

Oklahoma! was a *coup de théâtre*—it ran for more than 2,000 performances, made buckets of money, and changed the course of the American musical, integrating plot, songs, and dance in a new way. On Broadway, there was now a different H in R & H, as critics duly noted.

Victory has a thousand fathers, but there was one orphan on *Oklahoma!*'s opening night, March 31, 1943. In the crush at Sardi's, a tiny figure broke through the crowd of adulators to tell Rodgers: "This show of yours will run forever." It was a generous remark

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by a man who must have been suffering deep psychological pain. Even though he and his partner still planned to write a few new songs for the *Yankee* revival, it was obvious that the Hart had gone out of the relationship.

Eight months later, *A Connecticut Yankee* opened at the Martin Beck Theater. Larry showed up drunk, loudly singing along with the principals. Richard had him escorted out as the lilting melody and bright verse of the team's last black-humor song went on:

I married many men, a ton of them,
And yet I was untrue to none of them,
Because I bumped off every one of them
To keep my love alive. . . .

Sir Athelstane indulged in fratricide,
He killed his dad and that was patricide,
One night I stabbed him at my mattress side
To keep my love alive
To keep my love alive.

The next day Hart disappeared. Composer Fritz Loewe (*My Fair Lady*) found him the following night sitting on a curb on Eighth Avenue—drunk, feverish, and indifferent to the cold autumn rain. Loewe rushed Hart to Doctors Hospital and there, on November 22, he died, aged 48. The official cause of death: pneumonia. It would have been truer to say that the lyricist died of self-inflicted wounds.

Objectively, there was no reason for Rodgers to feel guilty: he had done all he could to save Larry from Larry. But while he threw himself into new projects with Hammerstein, subtle changes in the composer's mien spoke volumes. He began to look older than his years, heavier in the midsection, more lined in the face. His marriage suffered. He and Dorothy went on as a couple, but both daughters noted ominous silences and other signs of marital strain.

Stephen Sondheim, a Hammerstein acolyte, remembered Rodgers in the mid-1940s as he worked with Oscar to transform the Ferenc Molnár play *Liliom* into *Carousel*. Rodgers crafted some of his most beautiful and upbeat melodies for that show, yet he impressed the youthful Sondheim as discontented, acrimonious, and restive. The reason seemed obvious to Sondheim. When Rodgers worked with Hart, he was the responsible partner; with Hammerstein, the roles had reversed. Hammerstein "was a generous, big-hearted man who devoted himself to good works such as the World Federalists and all those things," Sondheim observed. "He was more than just a book or lyric writer. He was a man of the theater. I suspect that Dick began to believe Oscar was seen this way and he was the mean little man in the office . . . the drunk. He became a whole other person."

Rodgers went public with his phobias. He expressed his fear of flying, of driving in tunnels and over bridges. And some part of him seemed to close down. He was now drinking to excess (sometimes as much as a bottle of vodka per diem), though few outside his family noticed—unlike Hart, he could hold his liquor. He didn't weave or slur his words; he simply became more withdrawn. Even when sober, Rodgers found social occasions increasingly a strain. Hammerstein's son, William, lunched several times with Rodgers and found his host enigmatic. "I was never comfortable with him, and I mentioned this to Dad," he recalled. Oscar replied, "Nobody is. It's not you, it's Dick."

Yet the soaring melodies still poured forth—even richer, more complex. Lorenz Hart brought out Rodgers's glittering surface; Oscar Hammerstein probed deeper, forcing his collaborator to write more serious and sustained melodies. In Molnár's *Liliom*, for example, the lovers exchange two lines:

LILIOM: But you wouldn't marry a rough guy like me—that is—eh—if you loved me.
JULIE: Yes, I would—if I loved you, Mr. Liliom.

For *Carousel*, Hammerstein switched the locale from France to New England, and used their words as the springboard entirely expressed in the conditional:

If I loved you,
Time and again I would try

Yul Brynner and Gertrude Lawrence in *The King and I*

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to say
All I'd want you to know.
If I loved you,
Words wouldn't come in an easy way—
Round in circles I'd go!
Longin' to tell you, but afraid and shy,
I'd let my golden chances pass me by.
Soon you'd leave me,
Off you would go in the mist of day,
Never, never to know
How I loved you—
If I loved you.

Rodgers's tune captures the poignancy and sexual tension of the lovers. That song, along with "June Is Bustin' Out All Over" and other powerhouse numbers, made *Carousel* the most talked-about musical of 1945. One song, "You'll Never Walk Alone," perfectly captured the renewed faith and optimism of postwar America:

When you walk through a storm,
Keep your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark.
At the end of the storm
Is a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark.

Rodgers and Hammerstein were not infallible. They stubbed their toes with *Pipe Dream*, adapted from John Steinbeck's raffish *Cannery Row*, and with the backstage story *Me and Juliet*, their only show not based on a book or straight play. Still, they remained Broadway royalty.

It was during *Juliet* rehearsals in 1955 that Rodgers felt twinges of pain in his left jaw. X-rays showed a malignant growth. "He was very fearful about health," his daughter Mary said. "When he finally got cancer of the jaw I think he was relieved, because he'd been waiting for something to happen for so long when it finally happened it was like, 'Oh, well, now I've got *that* over with.'"

Doctors removed part of Rodgers's jaw, and all the teeth from the cancerous side of his mouth. The procedure would have sidelined other patients for months. Ten days later, Rodgers was tending to rehearsals. That *Juliet* had a disappointingly short run hardly mattered. What *was* vital was the next show, and the show after that. No one in the family (or out of it, for that matter) had ever seen the composer sit at the piano and play for sheer enjoyment. He only went to the ivories to write a song for a specific character in a specific musical. It was all he knew how to do, all he wanted to do. He had no close friends, no hobbies, no wish to visit foreign climes. Broadway was his life.

Partly this was due to his half-alcoholic/half-workaholic nature, partly because he found his marriage confining. He needed Dorothy and relied on her judgment about theatrical matters. She was a strong-minded, capable woman, who had run a business that maintained high-end apartments. In her spare time, she had invented the "Jonny Mop," a toilet-cleaning device that, to her amusement, became a department store best-seller. But she was also a compulsive manager, at once a boon and a trial for her husband. According to their daughter Linda, "It was a strange relationship. They needed and supported each other, and were the worst people in the world for each other. When he had problems she was always there to take charge. I am not sure he had much of a say. He was quite a passive partner."

To escape, Rodgers fled to the theater whenever possible, taking comfort in aspects of show business that everyone else loathed: the out-of-town tryouts, the frantic rewrites, even the delicatessen sandwiches and pickles that are the cuisine of showfolk in rehearsal. And he became inordinately fond of various chorines and divas. "He liked to talk about all the young ladies of the stage he had known," says Shirley Jones in *The Sweetest Sounds*, a PBS documentary about Rodgers. "He called them his little friends, so obviously he had quite a few romances." But the dalliances did not relieve a persistent malaise, a feeling of inadequacy he could never quite define. Alcohol could not assuage it, nor could the five psychiatrists he consulted.

Troubled he may have been, but the composer retained a clear head for business. In the 1950s, he and Hammerstein

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became producers as well as writers, seeking to control the financial and aesthetic facets of every show. They had watched insensitive producers excise favorite numbers, and they resolved that it would never happen again. By the end of the decade, they were an institution. No other Broadway team, past or present, had written so many influential stage musicals, with so many songs that had entered the American bloodstream.

From *South Pacific*, for example, had come "Some Enchanted Evening," "There Is Nothing Like a Dame," "Younger than Springtime"—and the achingly self-conscious editorial, "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught":

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade
You've got to be carefully taught.
You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught.

No one could accuse Rodgers and Hammerstein of hypocrisy. The duo's supreme achievement was 1951's *The King and I*, with its pageant of unforgettable songs, including "Whistle a Happy Tune" and "Shall We Dance?" Brilliantly directed by choreographer Jerome Robbins, the show presented a candid view of people whose eyes *were* "oddly made"—the court of nineteenth-century Siam, with its complicated monarch, his intimidated wives, and the forthright English governess whose encounter with the king presents the greatest unconsummated love story in the annals of musical theater. The team returned to Asian themes in *Flower Drum Song*, about Chinese Americans in San Francisco. This, too, had best-selling numbers, including "I Enjoy Being a Girl."

Alas, at the end of the decade, the second R & H partnership came to a tragic end: doctors diagnosed Oscar with terminal stomach cancer. *The Sound of Music*, the duo's final show, opened at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater in 1959. The *Herald Tribune* review expressed the lukewarm critical reaction: "Not only too sweet for words, but almost too sweet for music." It didn't matter. Rodgers and Hammerstein's finale ran for 1,443 performances, the 1965 film version was an even bigger grosser, and several of the songs, notably, "Do-Re-Mi," "Edelweiss," and "My Favorite Things" became pop classics. Those who found the last song saccharine were in for a surprise when they heard jazz saxophonist John Coltrane's evocative version. They had forgotten that Rodgers never let himself be pigeonholed. Call his music impertinent, and he'd come up with something serious; accuse him of sliding backward to operetta, and he would write a song to challenge the hippest jazzman.

Oscar Hammerstein II died on August 23, 1960, aged 65. Rodgers was devastated. He was only 58, unready "to be turned out to pasture." Rodgers added: "It's very easy for an upset man to retire. As you get older you get more scared. But what would I do if I retired? I'm not a golfer." He had worked with two collaborators over a 43-year career, and it would not be easy to find another. His talent for luck had begun to run out.

While he pondered the possibilities, the Rodgers family settled into apartments at the Hotel Pierre. There Richard became his own wordsmith, writing the lyrics as well as the melodies of *No Strings*, a groundbreaking story of an interracial romance. The rhymes had neither the jounce of Hart nor the sentiment of Hammerstein, but the title song became a cabaret standard:

The sweetest sounds I'll ever hear
Are still inside my head.
The kindest words I'll ever know
Are waiting to be said.

Rodgers never flew solo again. Asocial as he could be, the consummate music man needed company. He worked with the prominent (Sondheim in *Do I Hear a Waltz?* and Sheldon Harnick in *Rex*) as well as the uncelebrated (Martin Charnin in *Two by Two* and *I Remember Mama*). Yet though

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his work was never less than creditable, he had passed his prime.

During Rodgers's decline, the afflictions he had feared in Hollywood roared back. He wound up in the hospital, suffering from alcoholism and depression. Then cancer returned in his 72nd year, this time in his throat. He underwent a laryngectomy, depriving him of his normal voice and forcing him to learn esophageal speech. Observed Rodgers's daughter Linda, "For somebody who gave such incredible pleasure to so many millions of people, not to have had the same kind of joy and contentment and comfort in his own life—is just awful."

He went on searching for new refrains until his death on December 30, 1979, at the Pierre. His body was cremated. There is no grave, no statue, no marker; the location of his ashes is a secret.

PHOTOFEST

Richard Rodgers at 57

As, finally, is the musician himself. What had troubled him from the early days has never definitively become clear. But one clue shows up in the last words of his autobiography, *Musical Stages*. "There is a traditional trick," he writes, "that theater people have played as long as I can remember. A veteran member of a company will order a gullible newcomer to find the key to the curtain. Naturally, the joke is that there is no such thing. I have been in the theater over fifty years, and I don't think anyone would consider me naïve, but all my life I've been searching for that key."

If that key remained undiscovered, he found all the other keys, from C to shining C. The notes he put together over a lifetime make him a pantheon figure in American music—indeed in world music—beyond time and fashion. That his mystery endures matters little beside his sweet, ever-enduring melodies. ■

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Oh, to

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Sex and the Shakespeare Reader

Theodore Dalrymple

Shakespeare's plays are subject to fashion, just like everything else. In a recent production of *Hamlet* at my local repertory theatre, the Prince raped Ophelia on stage, which fully explained her subsequent insanity to any politically correct audience. At last it understood why she chanted snatches of old tunes, as one incapable of her own distress. Shakespeare, it seems, can be made to serve almost any agenda.

For most of the four centuries since it was first performed, *Measure for Measure* found little favor, and was even despised. Dryden, Doctor Johnson, and Coleridge—acute critics, all—detested it. Dryden wrote that it was "grounded on impossibilities, or at least so meanly written, that the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment." Dr. Johnson thought that in this play, Shakespeare "makes no just distribution of good and evil . . . he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the end dismisses them without further care." Coleridge called it "the most painful—say, rather, the only painful—part of his genuine works."

But suddenly, in the latter half of the twentieth century, it came to seem one of Shakespeare's most compelling and intriguing works. The questions it asks—to what extent does the state have the right or the duty to impose a sexual moral code upon its citizenry and, deeper still, how is sexual passion to be humanized?—seem more relevant to us now than at any time in the intervening years. In my everyday work as a doctor, for example, I see the results of ungoverned, and consequently ungovernable, passion: that is to say, murder, mayhem, and misery.

And, as usual, Shakespeare's answers to the questions he raises are subtle, far subtler than those of any ideologue or abstract theorist could ever be: for he is a realist without cynicism and an idealist without utopianism. He knows that the tension between men as they are and men as they ought to be will forever remain unresolved. Man's imperfectibility is no more an excuse for total permissiveness, however, than are man's imperfections a reason for inflexible intolerance.

Vincentio is Duke of Vienna, a sovereign with undisputed power and therefore much responsibility. Unfortunately, he has let things slide; he has allowed the laws against immorality to become a dead letter, and the Viennese to do very much as they please. He does not like the results:

> We have strict statutes and most biting laws,
> The needful bits and curbs to headstrong jades,
> Which for this fourteen years we have let slip;
> Even like an o'ergrown lion in a cage,
> That goes out not to prey. Now, as fond fathers,
> Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch
> Only to stick in their children's sight,
> For terror, not for use, in time the rod
> Becomes more mocked than feared . . .
> And liberty plucks justice by the nose;
> The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
> Goes all decorum.

The Duke realizes that something must be done, but he is not the man to do it:

> Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope,
> 'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them
> For what I bid them do . . . .

He therefore proposes to leave Vienna for a time, ostensibly to go on a long journey, but in reality to disguise himself as a friar to observe what happens in Vienna in his absence. As his deputy, he appoints Angelo, a man of inflexible moral principle, akin to the Puritans, who were increasingly influential in the Corporation of London at the time *Measure for Measure* was first performed. Viewing the drama and the playhouses as destructive of virtue and provocative of vice, the Puritans wished to close them down—a threat to Shakespeare's art and livelihood.

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Angelo disdains human weakness. According to the Duke:

> . . . Lord Angelo is precise,
> Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses
> That his blood flows, or that his appetite
> Is more to bread than stone.

Having been handed the Duke's power, Angelo decrees that all the brothels in Vienna must be closed and pulled down, and he orders that Claudio, "a young gentleman," be arrested and condemned to death for having got his beloved Juliet, whom he has promised to marry, with child. This is in strict accordance with the law against fornication.

Isabella, Claudio's beautiful and chaste young sister, who has just entered a convent as a novice, goes to plead with Angelo for her brother's life. At first, he refuses her suit; but then he finds that he is as other men are and comes strongly to desire her. "Ever till now," he soliloquizes, "When men were fond, I smiled and wondered how."

He offers to spare her brother's life if Isabella will sleep with him. Isabella is horrified; but after various machinations suggested by the Duke disguised as a friar, it is arranged that Angelo should sleep with a former betrothed of his, Mariana, whom he has cruelly repudiated because her dowry was lost at sea. After he has done so, however, still believing that he has slept with Isabella, he goes back on his word and orders that Claudio be executed nonetheless. Further machinations of the Duke prevent this mischance. The Duke returns to Vienna, publicly exposes Angelo as a hypocritical villain, and condemns him to death—the measure for measure of the title. Angelo is spared, however, because of the pleas of Mariana and Isabella on his behalf. He marries Mariana, the Duke marries Isabella, and Claudio marries his Juliet. Puritanism is soundly defeated, and all's well that ends well.

Measure for Measure was the first Shakespeare play I ever saw acted on the professional stage. It was in 1962, and my father took me to Stratford to see it during a school vacation. I don't suppose I understood much of its moral import at the time, and I certainly didn't realize that the questions it raises were to be so important in my later professional life. It must have been a somewhat uncomfortable experience for my father, an inveterate womanizer given to stern, universal, and almost puritanical moral pronouncements.

As it happens, the one individual performance I still remember is that of Angelo, who was played by Marius Goring, a distinguished stage and screen actor. When I read of his death in 1998, aged 86, more than a third of a century after I had seen him on the stage, he was still clad in my imagination in the burgundy velvet tunic and tights of his costume as Angelo.

By strange coincidence, Goring's father, Charles Goring, was a prison doctor, as I was myself to become years later. Doctor Goring wrote a big volume called *The English Convict*, intended as a refutation of the predominant criminological theory of the time, Italian positivism, whose most famous proponent, Cesare Lombroso, argued that criminality was a biological trait recognizable by physical signs such as a sloping forehead or narrowness between the eyes. Dr. Goring measured hundreds of English prisoners from head to toe and administered batteries of tests to them, correlating each measure with every other, and concluding that, measure for measure, there was no such thing as the biological criminal type.

At the time, this argument decisively swept the field: criminals are made, not born. But no refutation of so broad a theory as Italian positivism is ever quite decisive, and since then biological theories of crime have made a spirited, if still wrongheaded, comeback. The heredity of criminality and the neurobiology of illicit acquisition and aggression are once again respectable subjects of research, though they can never explain the important question of why some eras or populations are more crime-ridden than others.

The relation between the biological and the social, between the animal and the human, is the principal theme of *Measure for Measure*, as it was of Dr. Goring's less inspired, but still important, work. And Shakespeare certainly gives biology

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its due. Not only is his play anti-puritanical, but it recognizes without censoriousness the strength of the sexual urge and the intense pleasure it offers. The comic characters of the play (and *Measure for Measure* is counted among Shakespeare's comedies, though its theme could hardly be more serious, and a tragic outcome is only just averted) are almost innocent in their cheerful acceptance of fornication as a permanent and welcome feature of human existence. Certainly Mistress Overdone, the innkeeper whose hostelry is also a brothel of which she is the madam, Pompey her tapster, and Lucio, "a Fantastic," never sink anywhere near the depths of evil to which Angelo sinks, on account of the inevitable conflict between his unbending principles and his own human nature. Better a certain moral elasticity than complete moral rigidity. Moreover, an evening in their company would be very much more fun than an evening with Isabella, however morally perfect she might be. And if I had to guess what Shakespeare's personal attitude was to Mistress Overdone and her cronies, it would be affection, not outrage.

These comic characters are not without insight into human nature. When Mistress Overdone learns that Angelo has ordered that "All houses [brothels] in the suburbs of Vienna must be plucked down," Pompey consoles her:

> Come, fear not you; good counsellors lack no clients.
> Though you change your place, you need not change your trade.

The oldest profession will survive whatever the laws against it might be, for human nature will never change.

Similarly, when Lucio, a libertine somewhat higher up the social ladder than Mistress Overdone and Pompey, speaks to the Duke (at the time still disguised as a friar) about Lord Angelo, he suggests that "a little more lenity to lechery would do no harm in him." The Duke replies, "It is too general a vice, and severity must cure it." With a shrewd realism, Lucio says something whose truth only a man deluded by his moral enthusiasm, such as Angelo is, would not recognize at once: "it is impossible to extirp it quite . . . till eating and drinking be put down." Lust really does spring eternal.

But Shakespeare most decidedly does not leave it at that. He does not say, or in any way imply, that because lust is eternal, because it can never be extirpated quite, any and all sexual relations are perfectly in order and morally equal. I do not think, for example, that Shakespeare would view the sexual free-for-all of contemporary Britain—with its harvest of child neglect and abuse, morbid jealousy, sexual violence, and egocentric savagery—with the complacent impassivity of today's British intelligentsia. On the contrary: he would loathe it, for its consequences are precisely what he sees lurking in human nature if civilizing restraint be removed. Shakespeare is not a partisan of the noble savage who lives by instinct alone: rather, it is the savage in man that he fears and detests. The service that Mistress Overdone provides is fine—indeed, needed—as a safety valve, but as a model of all intimate human relations it is the primrose path to earthly perdition.

In fact, none of the major characters in the play regards sex as merely a biological or animal function and therefore of no moral concern. Of course, to regard sex only as a moral problem, as an impulse to be repressed at all costs, as Angelo does, is as deforming as to regard it as having no moral importance. An excess of moral rigor leads to dehumanization as surely as its total absence: and because of his moral zeal, Angelo's relations with women are thus either coldly contractual, as in the breaking of his engagement to Mariana, or those of a rapist, when the natural impulse becomes too strong to be resisted.

Claudio, the first victim of Angelo's inhuman zeal, does not himself deny the moral content of sexual relations and extenuates his impregnation of Juliet thus:

> . . . upon a true contract
> I got possession of Julietta's bed:
> You know the lady; She is fast my wife,
> Save that we do denuncia-

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tion lack
Of outward order.

His love of Juliet and his sincere promise to marry her, therefore, extenuate his conduct in his own eyes and, he hopes, in the eyes of others. But you only offer extenuation when you believe you have done wrong, or at least behaved less than ideally, in the first place. So Claudio is not claiming that he is innocent, only that his sin of not waiting for all the formalities to be completed is not a mortal one. And obviously we are intended to agree, for otherwise the disproportion between his action and Angelo's proposed punishment would not strike us so forcibly, and the tension would go out of the play. (Perhaps it is not coincidental that Ann Hathaway gave birth to Shakespeare's first child only six months after they were married.) If Angelo had merely fined Claudio and given him a stern lecture, the drama would have ended there and then.

But though Claudio accepts his guilt, he also points out that he is the victim of the zeitgeist of leniency in Vienna. When Lucio sees him being led off to jail, he asks Claudio "whence comes this restraint?"

From too much liberty, my
Lucio, liberty.
As surfeit is father to much
fast,
So every scope by the immoderate use,
Turns to restraint.

And, like everyone else in Vienna, Claudio has taken advantage of this liberty without much thought for the consequences:

Our natures do pursue
Like rats that ravin down
their proper bane,
A thirsty evil, and when we
drink we die.

In other words, restraints upon our natural inclinations, which left to themselves do not automatically lead us to do what is good for us and often indeed lead us to evil, are not only necessary; they are the indispensable condition of civilized existence.

Of course Isabella, Claudio's sister, disapproves of sexual intercourse outside of marriage. When she goes to Angelo to plead for her brother's life, she begins by saying:

There is a vice that most I
do abhor,
And most desire should meet
the blow of justice,
For which I would not plead,
but that I must . . . .

Later, when she goes to her brother in jail to tell him of Angelo's wicked proposition, she is horrified that Claudio, after a very brief resistance, suggests that, after all, his life is more important than her chastity, and therefore she should comply with Angelo. Outraged, she replies:

Mercy to thee would prove
itself a bawd,
'Tis best that thou diest
quickly.

These are the very last words she addresses to her brother in the play, and modern critics have found her fierce defense of her own chastity, even at the cost of her brother's life, puzzling and disproportionate, sententious and unattractive.

But this response shows a lack of historical understanding and imagination. Throughout most of history, chastity has been honored as an important virtue, precisely because it helps to control and civilize sexual relations. It has often been horribly overvalued, of course: for example, only last week a Kurdish Muslim refugee in Britain cut his own 16-year-old daughter's throat and left her to bleed to death because she was dressing in revealing western clothes and having sex with her boyfriend. But Isabella knows that a society that places no value at all on chastity will not place much value on fidelity either: and then we are back to the free-for-all and all its attendant problems. She fears not only for her own soul if she sins, but for that of society.

But if virtues and ideals (all of which are impossible to achieve perfectly) are part of what makes us human, Shakespeare implies that they, too, must be proportionate. At the end of the play, Isabella abandons her chastity and marries the Duke, suggesting that there is a time and place for such restraint, but it is not over the whole course of a human life. Carried to an extreme, chastity

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will cease to be a virtue and become, if not a vice, at least a stimulus to vice. If Angelo had not been so militantly chaste, he would have been far less likely to make his wicked attempt on Isabella.

Perhaps more surprisingly, Lucio, the rake and libertine, also sees the value of chastity. When he approaches Isabella to ask her to go to Angelo to plead for her brother's life, he says (and there is no suggestion that he is merely buttering her up):

> I hold you as a thing enskied and sainted,
> By your renouncement an immortal spirit
> And to be talked with in sincerity,
> As with a saint.

These are not the words of someone who thinks that sex is of no moral import. On the contrary, they are the words of someone who takes St. Paul's view of sex as a regrettable but inevitable snare, which most people, Lucio included, are too weak to avoid. His own conduct, however, is a living refutation of the impossibility of imposing the Pauline view by force, as Angelo tries to do.

A speech that the Duke, disguised as a friar, addresses to Pompey, Mistress Overdone's tapster, provides the key to the play. The Duke, remember, is responsible for the moral laxity of Vienna, but his previous reluctance to enforce the "strict statutes and most biting laws" does not spring from an ideological belief that everyone should be allowed to do whatever he wants, that anything goes, but rather from inattention, weakness, cowardice, and perhaps a desire for popularity. He is not himself licentious, being a studious and cultivated man, nor does he approve of licentiousness in others. He says to Pompey:

> Fie, sirrah, a bawd, a wicked bawd!
> The evil that thou causest to be done,
> That is thy means to live. Do thou but think
> What 'tis to cram a maw or clothe a back
> From such a filthy vice. Say to thyself,
> From their abominable and beastly touches
> I drink, I eat, array myself and live.
> Canst thou believe thy living is a life,
> So stinkingly depending?

This is not just rhetoric: the Duke, still disguised as a friar and acting, presumably, on religious authority, has Pompey carted off to jail.

The key word is "beastly": their beastly touches. By beastliness, the Duke means sexuality without the human qualities of love and commitment: for without love, sex is merely animal—beastly in the most literal sense. And, as the play's premise makes clear, the animal triumphs over the human when laws or institutions are too weak. The baby is not socialized by the nurse but beats her whenever it is thwarted in a desire, which in infancy can only be instinctive. It is only by having desire thwarted, and thereby learning to control it—in other words, by becoming civilized—that men become fully human.

So if Shakespeare is not a Puritan—he certainly does not think, because there is such a thing as virtue, that there shall be no more cakes and ale—he is not a complete latitudinarian in moral matters either. On the one hand, Angelo's utopian scheme to "extirp it quite" must founder on the rock of human nature, not least the human nature of the would-be extirpers themselves (as history attests); on the other, complete surrender to instinct leads to beastliness and therefore to a shallowing of the human personality. Shakespeare thus places himself between utopian totalitarians and libertarian fundamentalists. He provides us with no easy answers to the questions that confront us now and that will always confront us. His is a call neither to draconian severity and repression, nor to utter leniency and permissiveness, the two temptations of those who like to argue from first principles. He calls us to proportion, that is to say to humanity. We must both recognize the limitations imposed upon us by our natures and at the same time not give up striving to control ourselves. If we fail to do either, we shall succumb to ideological or instinctual beastliness—or (the curious achievement of our own age) to both. ■

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Letters

GLSEN Responds

To the editor:

Marjorie King's "Queering the Schools" [Spring 2003] does not fairly or factually represent the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network [GLSEN]. King's article poses as a well-researched critique, but she interviewed no one at GLSEN before writing this grossly inaccurate, misleading piece. And her irresponsible, salacious claims are given credibility by appearing in *City Journal*—not usually an outlet for half-baked journalism.

Among King's egregious misrepresentations is her description of a workshop conducted by a Massachusetts Department of Education employee at a GLSEN conference in 2000, which she calls "typical" of the "GLSEN agenda." In fact, upon learning of the workshop's content, GLSEN issued a statement that the workshop leader had been inappropriate, and took steps to ensure that such incidents wouldn't be repeated. This incident was isolated, not part of a pattern, and no similar incident has occurred since.

King cites as examples of GLSEN's "recommended curriculum" a series of books that are *not* recommended in our BookLink catalog.

She attacks students working to end school violence, saying they bear "a uniform faith . . . that experimenting with a range of homosexual behaviors serves the cause of civil rights." These students include a Special Olympics board member, an anti-smoking advocate, and an aspiring special-ed teacher; they exhibit a civic engagement that should be applauded, not denigrated with glib and inaccurate characterizations.

King dismisses the need for anti-bullying and anti-violence programs for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT] students: "gay groups contend—dubiously—that such programs are necessary because homosexual students must endure bullying and hatred every day in schools across the country." King should ask the families of Matthew Shepard, Gwen Araujo, or Sakia Gunn—students murdered partly because of their sexual orientation—how dubious this contention is.

The facts are clear: harassment is the rule, not the exception, for LGBT students. The Centers for Disease Control have found that LGBT students are more than twice as likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon as non-LGBT students (18.6 percent vs. 7.6 percent, respectively) and to miss school out of fear for their safety (16.4 percent vs. 7.6 percent). If you're too afraid to go to school, you're not going to get an education.

GLSEN's mission is to ensure that schools are safe, effective environments for all students to learn, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. All claims to the contrary are mere distractions that force our organization to turn our attention to debating distorted half-truths. To mischaracterize and attack an organization whose sole mission is to end harassment is contemptible.

Kevin Jennings
Executive Director, GLSEN

The editors respond:

GLSEN's Kevin Jennings hurls many insults at "Queering the Schools": "misleading," "distorted," "salacious," and "contemptible," among them. But Mr. Jennings never substantiates his baseless charges—and he makes some highly misleading comments in the course of his name-calling.

The first concerns a workshop for "youth only—ages 14-21" held in 2000 at Tufts University, which (among other things) instructed teens in the dangerous practice of "fisting": inserting a fist into a sexual partner's anus or vagina. Mr. Jennings admits the event was "inappropriate" and claims that GLSEN has taken steps to ensure it won't happen again. We're glad GLSEN agrees that the workshop was wrong—though "inappropriate" is a tame word to describe teaching such practices to kids not old enough to drink legally. But Mr. Jennings seems to forget that parents' groups criticized GLSEN for its 2001 Tufts conference, as well—where, for instance, Planned Parenthood reportedly handed out kits to teenagers for "safe" fisting.

Moreover, Mr. Jennings says nothing about workshops for teachers, featured at these and other GLSEN conferences, exploring themes like "Addressing GLBT Issues in Preschools, Daycare and Kindergartens" and "Gender in the Early Child Classroom." He remains silent because GLSEN *does* think it appropriate to have schools plan activities in which second-grade boys dress up in high heels—as one GLSEN-recommended

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Letters

teachers' resource book suggests—to fight bigotry against transsexuals. We don't agree, and it's a safe bet that most other parents don't, either.

Next, Mr. Jennings protests that GLSEN doesn't endorse the books cited in "Queering the Schools," like Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, which features homosexual teen sex and bestiality. Apparently, he hasn't seen the "Selected Bibliography of Books for Children and Young Adults" on his own website, which describes that book as "incredibly compelling."

Third, Mr. Jennings complains that, in describing GLSEN student activists as loyal to GLSEN's belief that experimentation with homosexual behavior serves the cause of civil rights, we don't also mention their other activities: stamping out smoking, volunteering for the Special Olympics, etc. It's great that these kids have interests other than GLSEN. Yet Mr. Jennings doesn't reject our characterization of GLSEN's worldview or their student activists' commitment to it.

Finally, Mr. Jennings argues that "Queering the Schools" ignores the harassment that LGBT students face daily in schools, which in turn necessitates GLSEN's radical remaking of school (even pre-school) curricula to emphasize LGBT themes and endorse LGBT behaviors. This agenda runs counter to the most deeply held values of many parents.

No one wants to see any child bullied or harmed, for any reason—as our article says. But unsafe schools result from a breakdown of school discipline generally, as Mr. Jennings's own numbers underscore. If 18.6 percent of LGBT students have been threatened or injured with a weapon, so have 7.6 percent of all students. Since LGBT students are a tiny fraction of all students, that 7.6 percent represents a much bigger problem. Make schools safe for everybody; forbid all examples of intimidation and abuse—that's our commonsensical view. There's no need to revolutionize school curricula in ways that seek to transform tolerance for homosexuals and the transgendered into full-fledged approval.

GLSEN's project is so radical that it risks undermining public toleration of homosexuality. A recent Gallup poll shows that 46 percent of Americans think homosexual relations should be *illegal*, while 49 percent say homosexuality "should not be an acceptable alternative lifestyle"—a much more anti-homosexual result than previous polls. These stark numbers mark a powerful public backlash against homosexuality in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Lawrence* decision invalidating anti-sodomy laws. Elites using public schools to indoctrinate children—even very young children—into a minority worldview at odds with their parents' values is a kind of tyranny that will also call forth an inevitable backlash.

He's *Our* Liar

To the editor:

Kay S. Hymowitz's "Michael Moore—Humbug" [Summer 2003] is probably fair enough—in a small, little way. Swaying the mob means saying something catchy, again and again. George W. Bush is great at it. To single out Moore in an age of mind-numbing folksiness in politics is disingenuous. Come off it, Kay. The fight is joined, so quit whining.

Dominic Taylor
London, England

To the editor:

Though he does have a hungry ego, Michael Moore makes a damn good point: the 11 o'clock news is utter B.S. Many people aren't aware of this, some keep it to themselves. Moore is not a sacred messenger of the truth, but he makes people reflect on important issues easily overlooked in our fast-food, gimme-gimme world.

Yes, his opinions permeate his films and books—but that's the case with every author. Maybe *you* are the one living in a convenient "Manichaean" world, where you play ax-man to everyone else's wood. It must be tough to sleep at night.

Chris Volpe
Via e-mail

Kay S. Hymowitz responds:

I received many letters that can be boiled down to two strains of hyperventilation: 1) &!%@*$#!; and 2) "Moore may be a liar, but he's *our* liar." These are the fans of a supposed hypocrite-basher?

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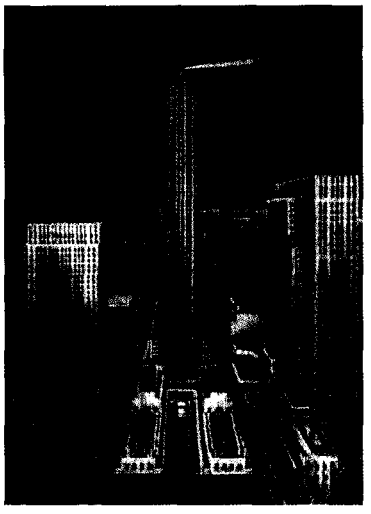

Rockefeller Center at Night,
New York City, ca. 1937.
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Victor Davis Hanson is a military historian, and the author of *Ripples of Battle, Mexifornia, Carnage and Culture*, and many other books. He teaches classics at California State University at Fresno and lives on a family farm in Selma, California.

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A Holy Mess

Brian C. Anderson

My wife and I have sent our five-year-old son to kindergarten at the small Catholic school in our Westchester town for the reasons you'd expect: we're Catholic, we love the school's old-fashioned curricula and its friendly but disciplined atmosphere (including the sharp uniforms), and we weren't impressed with the local public school, where the classroom walls, festooned with feminist and multi-culti icons, shout PC indoctrination and early tweens dress like hookers and hoodlums. Our first parents' association meeting, with lots of talk of phonics and high math achievement, convinced us that we'd made the right choice.

Until the pastor, Father Bill, spoke.

Thanking us, Father Bill (not his real name)—Irish and a bit past middle age—had a big announcement. "This year, we're adding a new curriculum, and I'll be teaching it: peace studies." I said to my wife: "He's not going to say what I think he's going to say, is he?"

Sadly, he was. "Tomorrow, September 11, a group led by friends and family of those who died on 9/11 will make a walk for peace, beginning at Gandhi's statue in Union Square and finishing at the WTC site. They're saying that they don't want the memory of the tragedy to be hijacked by the warmongers," Father Bill said gravely. "And that's what I want to teach your kids." Looking around, I saw several parents who seemed as uneasy as we did with this left-wing bunkum.

He continued: "Look at our colleges, where the ROTC can recruit people to kill. Yet how many kids today know the Nobel Peace award winners?" By now, I was really squirming. To impugn the ROTC when Americans were fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, on the anniversary of 9/11 to boot, was unconscionable. And what Nobel winners did he mean? Yasser Arafat?

Father Bill concluded: "We can't denigrate an entire race [*sic*] just because of a few fanatics—we have fanatics on our side too." The doctrine of moral equivalence, beloved by the far Left as a way of attacking the U. S., had reared its head: Donald Rumsfeld = Usama. Most of the crowd clapped, but without enthusiasm. My wife and I just glared. Nobody said a word. As parish pastor, after all, he was head of the school.

Peeved as Father Bill had made me, I shouldn't have been surprised. Catholic priests—especially those, like him, who came of age during the 1960s and were swept up in the heady spirit of the Second Vatican Council—tend to look to the *New York Times* editorial page or even to the "liberation theology" of radical Third Worldist priests for political guidance, not to the teachings of Augustine or Aquinas on a fallen world and the potential for evil that runs through every heart. Instead of the Christian doctrine of the just war based on this realistic view of man's nature, which recognizes that military force is sometimes necessary and moral, the liberal priests embrace a pacifism utterly at odds with it. War, in their view, is always bad; "dialogue," even with mass murderers, is always good.

In social policy, moreover, Catholic tradition teaches, the Church's duty is to lay down the principles that should guide judgment, not—as Father Bill did—make the particular judgments. Reasonable Catholics can disagree about the War on Terror, just as they can on other political issues.

Ultimately, Father Bill's "peace studies," like other political causes espoused by Church leaders since the sixties, undermine the Church's already battered moral authority. My son's experience illustrates the point. After a service presided over by Father Bill, he told me: "You must never war, Daddy—that's what Father says." I had to correct him: sometimes there are bad men in the world, and we need force to stop them. On reflection, he had no problem with that. One of his favorite TV shows is *Justice League*, chronicling the (often violent) adventures of Superman, Batman, and other heroes as they oppose monstrous villains. But now he's likely to treat all of what Father Bill says with greater skepticism. Father Bill's radicalism hasn't outweighed the other advantages of choosing a Catholic education for our boy. But it sure has made that choice less satisfying.

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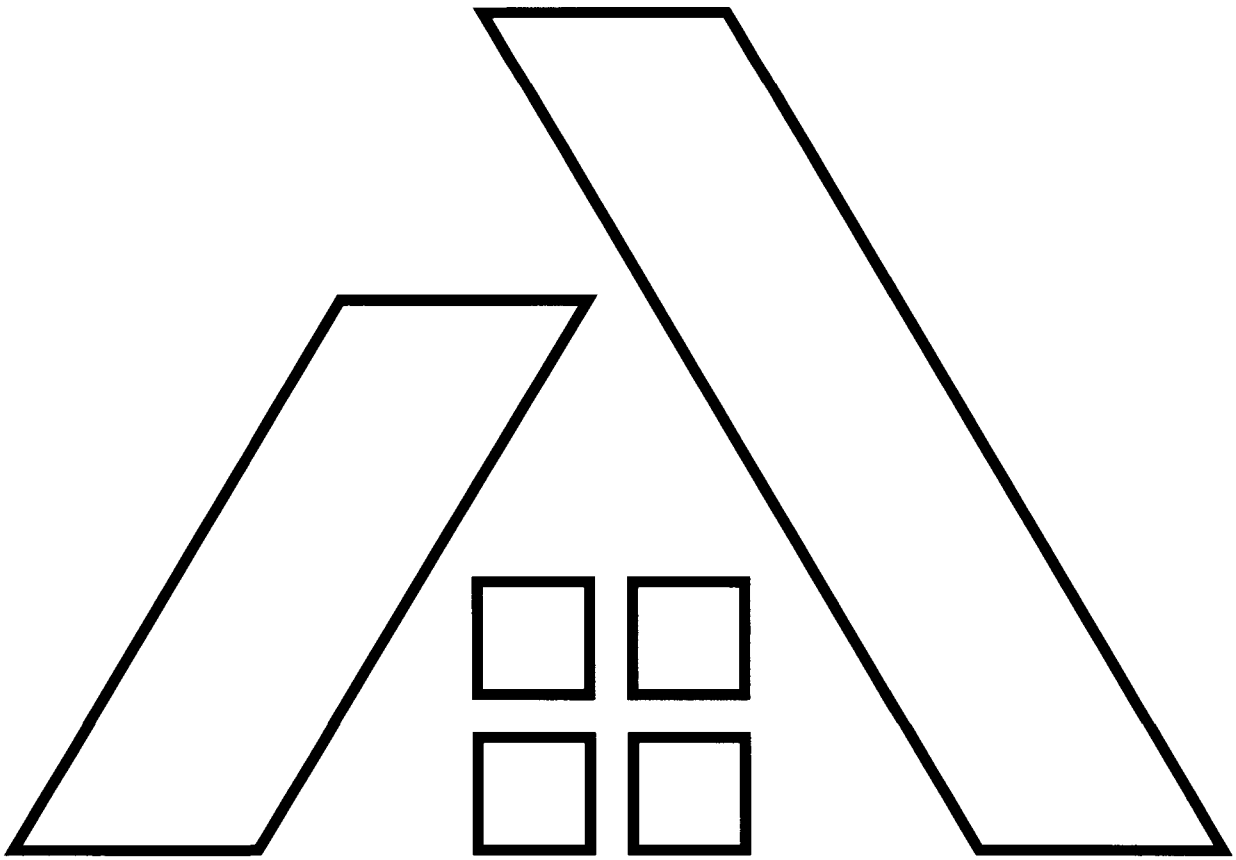

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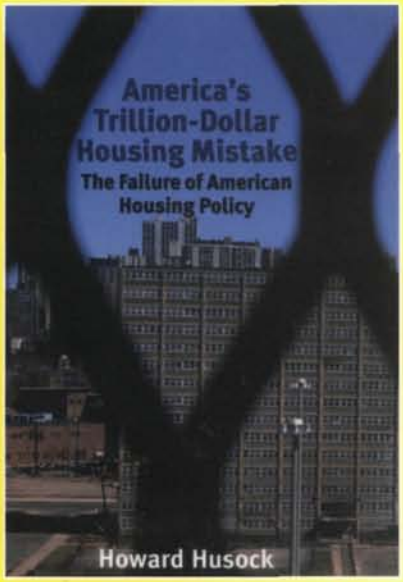

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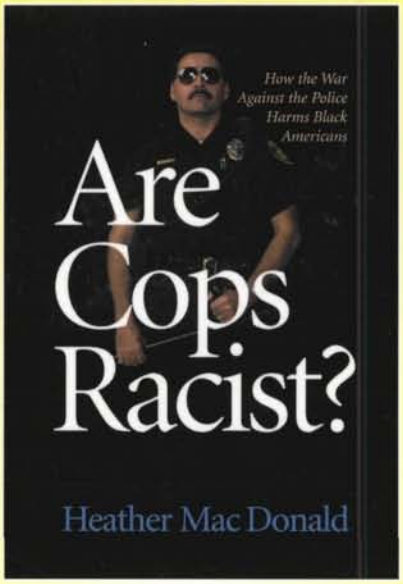

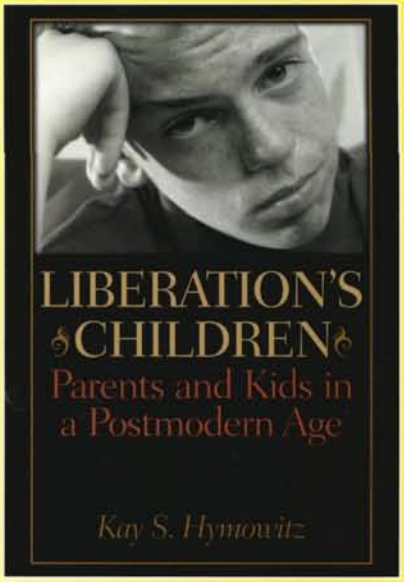

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-*Washington Post*

Sol Stern, *Breaking Free*
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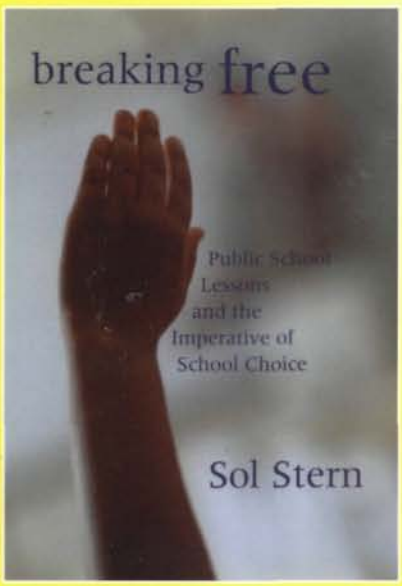
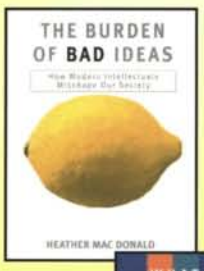
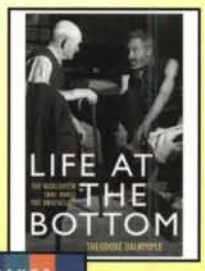
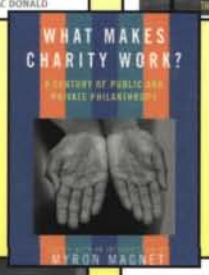
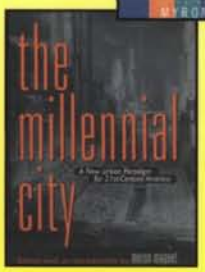


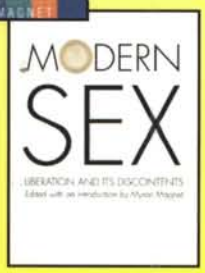
And bear in mind:











Victor Davis Hanson, *Mexifornia*
Encounter Books, 2003 [ISBN: 1893554732]
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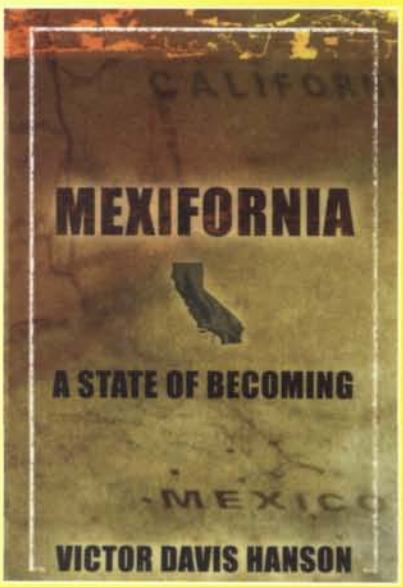

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